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Not Winter But Spring

AND OTHER STORIES ON MUTUAL AID AND CO-OPERATION IN CHINESE AGRICULTURE

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Preface

The movement for mutual aid and co-operation in agriculture began in China after the land reform had made the peasants the owners of the soil. In the summer of 1955, this movement swept over the rural areas in a surging tide. By the end of March this year, more than 90 per cent of China's peasant households had joined agricultural producers' co-operatives; now a co-operative economy predominates in the countryside, with collective or semi-collective ownership of the means of production. By 1957, practically all co-operatives will have become fully socialist in nature, i.e. collective farms.

Tremendous changes have come about in the villages with the expansion of co-operation in agriculture. The nineteen articles here put together in book form, most of which appeared in newspapers and periodicals during 1955, mirror the changes arising out of this development towards co-operation.

The complex conditions of China's vast countryside make it virtually impossible to cover every aspect of the rapid changes and progress in a few years' time in a single book. This publication will have served its purpose if it helps the reader a little to visualize some of the changes and how they were brought about.

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THE ROAD FOR FIVE HUNDRED MILLION PEASANTS

Li Kai and Ching Shen

In his report on "The Question of Agricultural Co-operation" Chairman Mao Tse-tung says, "In one very small co-operative of only six households in Hopei Province, the three old middle-peasant households firmly refused to carry on and left. The three poor-peasant households decided to continue at all costs, stayed in, and the co-operative organization was preserved. The fact is, the road taken by these three poor-peasant households is the one which will be taken by five hundred million peasants throughout the country. All peasants working on their own will eventually take the road resolutely chosen by these three poor-peasant households."

The small co-operative which Chairman Mao singles out for special mention is one organized by Wang Yu-kun, Wang Hsiao-chi and Wang Hsiao-pang, three poor peasants living in the village of Nanwang, Anping County, Hopei.

Our interest in this co-operative roused, we paid it a visit, arriving on November 21, 1955. We immediately noticed the exciting and stimulating atmosphere there. Early morning found the peasants, both men and women, out working in the cold wind, sweep-

ing up fallen leaves for compost. At dusk, coming home from the fields, the peasants formed a long procession on the narrow road, calling to each other and exchanging news about the work of the day. "More than two hundred households have joined the co-op lately," the village functionaries told us. "To make sure of a good harvest next year, the members started agitating to take only ploughed land into the co-op with them. By tomorrow,"—November 24 that was—"the co-op members will have finished ploughing 4,700 *mou*."[1] The previous year the snow caught the villagers with more than 500 *mou* still unploughed. The fields lay deep under snow and they had to wait till spring before they could do anything more.

"Listen to Chairman Mao and follow the road taken by Yu-kun and the others. Join the co-operative and make it a success!" That has become the watchword for the peasants of this village. Those who had already joined all wore smiling faces and looked very pleased. Members of the Village Co-operative Preparatory Committee were as busy as bees, some looking over and fixing a price for the farm implements with the members, others checking the books and planning how to put the co-op's land to the best use. "If you'd come in spring," said Wang Mi-kuei, the Party secretary, "you wouldn't have seen anything like this. At that time quite a number of well-off peasants were clamouring to get out of the co-operatives! They weren't at all keen on work. But since the small

[1] Six *mou* make an acre.

co-ops merged into a big one, those who backed out have come back. Things are run quite differently now."

Yes—in the short span of one year, a tremendous change has come over Nanwang Village.

II

The high tide of the movement to go over to agricultural co-operation reached Hopei in the autumn of 1954. The three small co-operatives in Nanwang Village quickly turned into two fairly large and six small co-ops. Instead of 21 households in the village, the co-operatives now boasted 264. Wang Yu-kun, a Party member, Wang Hsiao-chi and Wang Hsiao-pang, all of them poor peasants, showed how brimful of enthusiasm for socialism they were. They were not only the first to join a co-op, but they did their utmost to make it a success. Some of the better-off peasants, though, had joined the co-op intending to grab whatever they could get out of it. They pretended to be keen but they weren't really interested in making the co-op do well. They were, on the quiet, calculating how to advance their private interests. The Party secretary at that time, an upper middle peasant by the name of Wang Wen-chang, failed to carry out the policy of the Party. He only looked after the interests of the well-off peasants. Ten out of the fourteen brigade leaders and deputy leaders in the medium-sized co-op which he led were also upper middle peasants. The three poor peasants, Wang Yu-kun, Wang Hsiao-chi and Wang Hsiao-pang, belonged to this co-op.

As soon as the co-operative was formed, its members decided that draught animals owned individually should be pooled in the co-op at market price, because most of the members had animals and fodder of their own. On the afternoon fixed, the poor peasants and lower middle peasants who owned draught animals brought them to the co-op. The well-off peasants, however, Wang Wen-chang among them, did not produce their mules. As if that wasn't enough, the leaders of the co-op decided to let the peasants who had kept their mules keep 30 per cent of their fodder too. But the poor and lower middle peasants who had pooled their mules were told to hand in all the fodder in their possession so that it could be used to help the teams which hadn't enough. (These teams were short of fodder precisely because several of their members had kept their mules at home.) Wang Yu-kun and other poor peasants in the co-op fought hard against this unjust decision, which served the interest of the well-off peasants at the poor peasants' expense. No sooner had Wang Wen-chang said that mules were not to be pooled in the co-op than Yu-kun asked him: "What's the idea? Why should the better-off households keep their mules and the poor peasants' mules farm the co-op land?" Seeing that things were not going the way he wanted, Wang Wen-chang sold his mule without a word to a soul. Wang Yu-kun also took the co-op leaders to task over the question of fodder. "Those who brought in their draught animals," he said, "have to bring in more fodder, while those who didn't are allowed to bring less. You're only making

things easy for the well-off peasants. Why don't you think of the poor ones?" "It's a question of mutual aid and brotherly love," argued Wang Wen-chang glibly. "Pooh!" said Yu-kun. "You talk of brotherly love when you want the poor peasants to bring their fodder. Why don't you ask the better-off ones to show some brotherly love when the poor peasants have no grain for food?" Wang Wen-chang had no answer to this. However, the responsible Communist members of the co-op still did nothing in the way of examining their own bourgeois ideas. They even grew worse and began to neglect their duties — Wang Wen-chang, for instance. There were some who tried to discredit Wang Yu-kun. At one time, when Wang Yu-kun's kiddy had died and he was feeling depressed, they told the County Party Committee that he showed no interest in his work and wasn't carrying out Party policy (by which they meant the opinion of a mere handful of Party functionaries, an opinion which worked against the interest of the poor peasants). But Wang Yu-kun fought back. At a Party meeting in which a comrade from the County Party Committee took part, he exposed their failure to stick to a class stand. Their scheme to discourage Wang Yu-kun failed.

In spring 1955, the well-off peasants not only displayed no fervour in work, but also started to spread rumours among the people. "It's impossible to keep the co-op going," they said. "The organizing of it is having a bad effect on agricultural output." "Let's split it up into smaller co-ops — we'll be able to manage small ones better!" But most of the poor and

lower middle peasants were determined to stay in the co-op. The only trouble was that the Party organization needed a shake-up that would bring the poor peasants out on top in the co-op. But worse happened: the functionaries who came to help the villagers consolidate their co-ops were swayed by the views of a small number of well-off peasants and rashly decided to split this medium-sized co-op into seven little ones —one for each of its production brigades. The six households of Wang Yu-kun, Wang Hsiao-chi, Wang Hsiao-pang and the middle peasants Wang Chen-huai, Wang Chen-fu and Wang Lo-ho were organized into one of these little co-ops.

III

The functionaries sincerely believed that after this split the small co-ops would flourish. But contrary to their expectations, the small co-ops ran into difficulties: the question of members wanting to withdraw popped up time and again. This was because a number of the better-off peasants had no real wish to get the small co-ops going. What they wanted was to change the bigger co-op into smaller ones and then kill off the smaller ones. Wang Wen-shuang, leader of one of the production brigades, was an upper middle peasant who, before the co-op broke up, gave his solemn word to the functionaries that if the co-op split up, he would run a small co-op well. But when the split occurred he cried off being the leader on the pretext that he was not up to it, and asked the members to elect another chairman for the small co-op. Some of

the members wanted to elect Li Wu, a Party member, but he made them elect Wang Tan-tan, who was politically backward and no good as a leader. And before very long, since Wang Wen-shuang did nothing to help the chairman he'd sponsored himself, this co-op went on the rocks.

While the upper middle peasants were clamouring to walk out of the co-op, a number of Party and Youth League members and the most active of the poor peasants continued to push ahead along the road pointed out by the Party. Wang Yu-kun, Wang Hsiao-chi and Wang Hsiao-pang were in the forefront of this group. At that time, bitter struggles over which of the two roads (socialism or capitalism) to follow were raging in Wang Yu-kun's co-op. The wheat sown by the co-op in the just under five *mou* of land owned by Wang Chen-huai (a middle peasant) grew exceptionally well. Every time Wang Chen-huai walked past his land he started making selfish calculations: none of the other six households in the co-op had land as fine as this piece of his, and he felt that there was no advantage for him to be in the same co-op as the poor peasants. When he saw how some small co-ops went to pieces, he talked it over with his brother, Wang Chen-fu, also a middle peasant, and they decided to withdraw from the co-op. Another middle peasant, Wang Lo-ho, also asked to withdraw when he heard their decision. Although Wang Yu-kun tried to explain the government's policy to them and point out the right road to follow, hoping to induce them to stay in, he had no success. "We

don't want to take that road as yet. We'll wait a bit and see," they said.

In May, the three poor peasants who wanted to stay in the co-op had a meeting. "Look," said Yu-kun resolutely. "The Party tells us that if we want a good life for ourselves and everyone else, we've got to persist in going the co-operative way. I shall follow the Party's advice — I'm going to stay in the co-op. What about you?"

"My mind's made up," said Hsiao-chi. "There's no other way for a household like mine except to join the co-op." "I've had enough of going it alone," said Hsiao-pang. "Let them withdraw. As long as you two want to carry on, I'll go with you." This determination of theirs to make the co-op a success proved to be a tremendous force. They agreed that even if the other three households insisted on backing out, they would carry on. They decided that in that case they would take one of the co-op's two oxen and carry on with three people and one ox.

Not long afterwards, a work team sent from the county and district to put the co-ops on a sound basis arrived in Nanwang Village. At a meeting, the work team comrades asked the peasants what they thought about things. The three middle peasants still said they wanted to withdraw from the co-op, but Wang Yu-kun, Wang Hsiao-chi and Wang Hsiao-pang vowed that they would stay and carry on without the other three.

What was it that made these three so determined to stay in the co-op? Let's examine the case of each.

Wang Yu-kun was a man in his prime, but he had suffered countless hardships in the old society. Before the land reform, he was one of the poorest of the poor peasants in the village. To make a living, he had had to work as a hired hand for the landlords. After he received land in the land reform, his life got gradually better. He was as active as anyone in the struggle that ensued during the land reform, it was then that he was admitted into the Communist Party. However, though he owned about a dozen *mou* of land, he had no farm implements and shared the ownership of a draught animal with another peasant, so the yield he got by individual farming was low — only a thousand catties or so of grain — and he had a large household to feed. Life wasn't easy for him. The Party's policy of encouraging agricultural co-operation showed him the direction to take and gave him strength. So in the co-operative movement in 1954 he was a real live-wire in leading the peasants to organize co-operatives.

Wang Hsiao-chi is a younger man — a member of the Youth League. He and his mother well remembered the hard, bitter days before the land reform. After his father died, his mother had to bring him up alone and they were constantly short of food and clothing. After the land reform, their living conditions improved, but they had no farm implements and only part ownership of a draught animal shared with three other peasants. He was young and inexperienced and knew little about farming, so the yield of their land was low, and it was still hard for them to make ends meet. When the Party pointed out that the road of

agricultural co-operation was the only sure way for peasants to shake off poverty, he talked it over with his mother and was one of the first to join the co-op.

The third, Wang Hsiao-pang, in his childhood had known the bitter experience of having to beg with his mother to live at all. After the land reform, because he lacked many of the things that a farmer needs he was far from successful in working his land. He dreamt of ways of making life more comfortable but it was impossible to achieve anything on the basis of individual farming. He had neither draught animal nor tool, so he always had a hard time coping with the sowing. Even when he did manage to get the seed in, it was still hard to tend the crops well without this, that and the other. He used to go round a lot with Wang Yu-kun and other Communists, so as soon as he realized that it was only by taking the co-operative road that he could shake off poverty, he was filled with a burning desire to make the co-op work well. In the drive for co-operation in 1954, Yu-kun, Hsiao-chi and he were the keenest in the whole village.

At the time when there were three households in Wang Yu-kun's small co-op demanding to withdraw and three others steadfast in wanting to carry on, the proper thing for the work team to do was to cherish and foster the socialist fervour of the peasants, support them in their actions and help them make a go of their co-op. But instead of doing so, the work team thought that a co-op had to look like "a proper co-op" . . . how could three households achieve anything? So they sought out Wang Yu-kun and told him, "Look, you've only got three households now. You can't run

a co-op on that, but we don't mind if your three households turn themselves into a mutual-aid team." These words were like a dash of cold water over Yu-kun's head.

To all appearances it did look as if the people in Nanwang had cooled off in their struggle for co-operation. Actually, the struggle went on without a moment's respite. That very evening, Yu-kun got Hsiao-chi and Hsiao-pang together. "It's like this," he told them. "The other three households are determined to back out. The work team thinks that there are too few of us and we haven't got the conditions for a co-operative, so they tell us to form a mutual-aid team. In my opinion, it doesn't matter whether we call ourselves a team or a co-op. We must still go on owning the draught animal collectively, share in contributing fodder, and work collectively to make a good job of our farming." The others agreed and so they carried on.

IV

Not long afterwards, news of these three peasants who refused to be deterred from taking the road to socialism reached Peking and the ears of Chairman Mao. Chairman Mao praised their action and fervour for socialism and told the Party to give them its backing.

Early in July, Anping County Party Committee sent Comrade Chou Chiu-hsueh to help the three peasants run their co-op. They held a meeting on July 18th. When Chou explained that the Party leaders

supported them in their desire to stay in the co-op, small as it was, they were no end encouraged. "Ever since I was told, about twenty days ago, to turn the co-op into a mutual-aid team," said Yu-kun, "I've been uneasy and unsettled. I couldn't help feeling that nobody ought to block the road pointed out by the Party. And it turns out that's really so."

The four of them discussed how to make a success of the co-op and came to the conclusion that results would tell—they must make a good showing on their land. Although they had not much in the way of tools, they must still show an increase in yields and produce more than the peasants who worked on their own.

That summer there was nothing but trouble. Locusts made an appearance in the two *mou* of late millet in the northwest corner of the village. The millet ears were just beginning to form, but if the locusts touched them, the crop would be finished. Wang Yu-kun, very worried, dashed off to buy insecticide and applied it. The pests were exterminated. Soon, however, another batch appeared, and this time there were more of them than the first time. Yu-kun and his fellow members worked like Trojans and exterminated them as fast as they appeared, so their two *mou* of millet suffered no damage. But the early millet belonging to Wang Chih-pin, a peasant farming on his own, suffered severely from the pests because he was unable to take effective measures to wipe them out. In the autumn, the co-op reaped 150 catties per *mou*. Wang Chih-pin only got a little over 50 to the *mou*.

One blazing summer day at noon it was so hot that the leaves of the maize curled into rolls, but two men wielded their hoes in a battle against weeds in the maize field in the northwest corner of the village. They were Hsiao-chi and Hsiao-pang. There had been a lot of rain that summer and the weeds had run riot. Yu-kun's small co-op decided that they must clear them at all costs. When others retreated under the shade for rest, they carried on doggedly. In the finish, on the co-op's 40 *mou* of land, you couldn't find a single stray weed. What a contrast that was to the land next to theirs belonging to Wang Lo-tai, a peasant working on his own. He had had no time to hoe properly and weeds were everywhere.

The co-op, of course, needed money to carry on its work, but where were they to get it from? The three members told one another they had just got to cut down expenses and save every possible penny. For several months the only thing they spent money on was oil for lamps and a bottle of writing ink. Before harvest time, the government saw that they were really hard up and gave them a loan of 200 yuan which they bought a cart with. This bit of help gave them new heart.

It was with such dogged persistence that the three poor peasants battled against all kinds of difficulties and finally increased the yield of their land. In 1954, before the three households were organized, all they reaped from their 40 *mou* was 950 catties of millet, 1,600 catties of maize, 1,300 catties of peanuts, 450 catties of cotton and 3,000 catties of sweet potatoes—the equivalent of approximately 6,580 catties of grain.

In 1955, as a co-op, they reaped 1,800 catties of millet, 1,980 catties of maize, 2,000 catties of peanuts, 700 catties of cotton, and 5,000 catties of sweet potatoes—the equivalent of approximately 9,950 catties of grain. They had increased their yield by more than 50 per cent compared with the year before. Naturally the real income of the three households was also greater than before. After deducting expenses, each household still had 1,100 catties more grain than the previous year. Compared with peasants outside the co-op they were far better off. Wang Lo-ho, one of those whose household backed out of the co-op, farmed his land with tools pretty much the same as those used in the co-op. But just when the crops needed tending most, Wang Lo-ho fell ill. His fields became choked with weeds and he only got an average of 150 catties per *mou* from his 19 *mou* of land, which was 90 catties per *mou* less than the co-op reaped.

When Yu-kun and the other two started their tiny little co-op, well-off peasants who had not joined a co-op jeered at them and sarcastically called theirs "The Giant." But the spirit and determination they displayed in following the road of agricultural co-operation at all costs and the fact that they did increase the yield of their land finally convinced everyone. No one mocked them any more. Nobody jeered about "The Giant."

The County Party Committee not only backed Wang Yu-kun's co-op; it also reorganized the Party branch in Nanwang. Wang Wen-chang, the Party secretary who had insisted on taking the capitalist road was expelled.

V

When Chairman Mao's report on "The Question of Agricultural Co-operation" went out to the countryside, it also reached Nanwang. When Yu-kun heard that Chairman Mao himself had praised them, he hastened to take the good news to Hsiao-chi, Hsiao-pang and their families. When she heard about it, Hsiao-chi's mother was moved to tears. "So Chairman Mao himself knows about our co-op too," she said. "Chairman Mao takes a real interest in us peasants." And she urged her son always to listen to the words of Chairman Mao and see that the co-op did well. The Party branch also passed Chairman Mao's directions on to the peasants and Nanwang Village was in a state of rare excitement. Members of the Party and Youth League and the live-wires among the poor peasants who were keen on the co-ops now held their heads high. Yu-kun, Hsiao-chi and Hsiao-pang were so busy that they hadn't a minute to rest going round and using their own experience to convince the peasants that they should join the co-op. In a few days, they persuaded nine households to apply for co-op membership. People who had backed out now realized how wrong they were and wanted to join again. Some upper middle peasants who were dubious before and others who had withdrawn also decided to plump for the co-operative road.

A headquarters to direct everything—the Village Co-op Preparatory Committee—was set up. The villagers elected Yu-kun its vice-chairman. Excited and glad, the peasants applied to join the co-op. Two

hundred and eighty households were admitted as members, that is, 85 per cent of the peasant households in the village were drawn in. "We must run our co-op well. By autumn next year, we'll be able to report to Chairman Mao on the results of our large co-op." That was what the members and their leaders told one another to spur themselves to do even better.

Nanwang Village is a fine little place and we found Wang Yu-kun, Wang Hsiao-chi and Wang Hsiao-pang to be people bent on going the socialist way. When we look at them, when we look at Nanwang Village, we can clearly see the road to be taken by our five hundred million peasants. We wish them greater success as they march forward on the road of agricultural co-operation.

November 1955

THE STORY OF LU CHIA-HSIU

Sha Ting

Lu Chia-hsiu is a sixteen-year-old girl, member of the Youth League and activist in her township. Last November she was elected deputy leader of a production team of the Red Light Agricultural Producers' Co-operative. The day before I got to the village of Stone Pagoda, she had been made the leader of the team because of general dissatisfaction with the old one who had failed in his responsibilities.

The Red Light Co-op had been organized just before the autumn. It would not be an exaggeration to say that, if it hadn't been for the co-op, Lu Chia-hsiu wouldn't be what she is today. Before she joined the co-op she was neither an activist nor a member of the Youth League, let alone the leader of a production team. She was just a little "housewife." When barely ten she had started helping her mother with the housework. By thirteen, she was looking after one smaller brother, carrying another one on her back, and keeping an eye on a baby sister who lay in a basket at her feet, while her little fingers were busy stitching cloth shoes. When her mother was sick, she had to do the cooking for the family as well, standing up on a stool in front of the big kitchen stove. Her mother was ill most of the time. When she died

in 1953, all the household duties fell on the young shoulders of Lu Chia-hsiu.

Before liberation, Lu Chia-hsiu's father had often been away from home, hiring himself out as a farm hand. The family rented two *mou* of land which did not bring enough to live on. So father worked at home only in the busy farming season. During the land reform, all the six members of his family had received their portion of land. He stopped working for others and with his wife pegged away at his own fields from morning till night. After his wife's death, the neighbours advised him to marry again, but he only smiled wryly. He was afraid the children might suffer. Lu Chia-hsiu, too, was against a stepmother, for fear her little brothers and baby sister would fall on evil days. As a very little girl, she had heard all sorts of tales about wicked stepmothers. So she went about the housework all the more diligently and in the busy season helped her father in the fields with redoubled energy. But no matter how hard they tried, father and daughter couldn't overcome the difficulties that beset them constantly. Their land was too scattered, one or two pieces of land too far from their home, they were short of manpower . . . they never could do well by their crops.

In 1953, they wanted to join a mutual-aid team, but the leader, Hsieh Kai-tai, didn't accept them. He thought their land was too scattered; he wasn't going to put such a burden on his team. Besides, he considered Old Lu "too backward." In 1954, Hsieh's team merged with two other mutual-aid teams. There was a drought that summer, but the combined team

managed to save all its seedlings. The Lus suffered quite a loss, and father and daughter realized ever more acutely that, alone, they could never make a go of farming.

There were twenty-one households in Hsieh Kai-tai's combined team. Last spring, the township's Communist Party branch approved the team's request to become a co-op. The team members began studying the regulations for co-ops as soon as they had finished weeding. Many of the villagers working individually asked to be allowed to join in this study. Lu was one of them and he examined the regulations with even greater interest than anyone else.

Lu was in his forties. The lightly padded coat of blue cotton cloth which he tightened around his waist with a white sash emphasized his tall and lean frame. His daughter was quite the opposite. Short and big-boned, she had a fair complexion, with rosy cheeks and big bright eyes.

"Even when it was raining, dad wouldn't let me go to study in his stead . . ." Lu Chia-hsiu said, to show how seriously her father took the co-op regulations.

"At that time, I hadn't things straightened out in my mind yet," her father put in, looking a bit sheepish.

"Guess what he said then?" Lu Chia-hsiu continued. She tried to give her father a glare, but a smile curving around her lips belied her intention. " 'You stay home and watch over the little ones,' he said. 'You're a half-grown woman now and the meeting's quite a distance away. I don't want you gadding

about in the night so that people will start gossiping about you.'"

"Are you still afraid that people will wag their tongues over your daughter's behaviour?" I shot at the father.

"Now it's me who often have to remind her to go to meetings," Lu replied. "Though she's smarter than me."

I knew already what the real situation was through the Party secretary. I'd been told that father and daughter seemed to have changed positions in the household since they joined the co-op. Now the father spent more time at home to look after his children, while Lu Chia-hsiu went out as the family's representative in community activities. Her father even encouraged her, telling her not to worry herself with household chores. Lu Chia-hsiu gave me a lively description of how this change came about.

"Let me tell you, comrade: If we hadn't been so flatly refused when we first applied to join the co-op, my father would never have changed his old-fashioned ideas so quickly," she began. Then, as if startled by her own audacity in putting it so frankly, she flushed scarlet. So she continued with more restraint. "Don't judge him by the way he's now. Formerly, if you wanted him to say something at a meeting—why, all he could do was to stammer and stutter! The day before the co-op started receiving applications for membership, I told him again and again: Don't forget to take the title deeds along now, dad, you wouldn't remember off-hand all the details! But he just went and forgot to take the papers along. You see, our

land is in little pieces scattered here and there. Even I couldn't remember everything about it. When dad got to the meeting, he tried hard to remember the essential points about our land. Of course, the more he racked his brains, the less he remembered. So there he was, fidgeting about like a man with a big problem on his mind; he could neither sit down nor stand up and be at ease. Somehow, it never entered his head that he could come back home and get the title deeds."

"I did think of it, but I was afraid if I went home for the deeds it would have been too late to apply when I got back to the meeting," her father corrected her.

"Funny thing was," Lu Chia-hsiu continued, "we didn't live so far from where the meeting was held. A good walker could easily have made it back and forth in the time it takes to finish smoking a pipe. But dad just went on fidgeting and figuring, even counting on his fingers. . . . People were laughing at him, but he didn't notice anything. It wasn't till all the others who wanted to apply had already given their names and Hsieh Kai-tai asked him directly if he had come to apply that dad said: 'Of course I want to. Just think, we've got only two people in the family who can work and we've quite a bit of land. . . .' But Hsieh Kai-tai cut him short: 'You can't do the thing unless you're ready for it. Better go home and think it over again.' 'What more is there to think over?' dad said, getting a bit upset. 'Things have gone wrong enough with our small crops.' But Hsieh Kai-tai wouldn't take dad's word for it. He

was sure dad was weighed down with doubts and worries."

"He didn't know that I couldn't remember the exact number of *mou* I had here and there and what their yield was," Lu said, with a sigh of relief now that the whole thing was over. "He only saw that I was fidgeting and so he decided that I had doubts about the co-op. When he finally took my application, he asked me again to make sure our whole family were agreed on joining the co-op and why my daughter wasn't there. So I said, 'She's only a young girl. She'll follow her dad on the road to socialism.' But by the look he gave me, I could tell he only half believed me. . . ."

"So that's why you came back and slapped me when you were refused!" Lu Chia-hsiu remarked, as if teasing her father on purpose. "You see, comrade, when he came home, I asked him cheerfully, 'So they approved our application, didn't they?' But he lost his temper. 'It's all your doing!' And then, while I was still dazed by the slap, he burst into heartbreaking sobs!"

"Comrade, you understand why I was crying, don't you?" Lu asked me.

"Dad had gone through too much," Lu Chia-hsiu explained for her father. "He was crying as he told me afterwards because for generations our family had never had even a handful of soil of our own and in the agrarian reform we'd got land like everyone else. But now in this co-operative movement, we were left out in the cold. . . .

"Dad's tears scared me. I forgot even the sting of his slap. The three little ones woke up at this point, crept out from under the quilt and sat up wide-eyed. The eldest was quiet but the two younger ones started to cry too. I got really angry. 'If they didn't let you join, you should have tried all the harder to get in. But you just cry! . . .' But dad didn't even then tell me the whole story, he hemmed and hawed and grumbled. 'I don't know how this brood of mine is going to live. Here we have a bit of land but what shall we do?'

"All that night I couldn't close my eyes. Dad, too, was sighing and tossing. The next morning I got up bright and early to see my uncle who is a Party member and vice-chairman of the co-op. You met him just a while ago. He used to work in our township government and was only transferred back here when the co-op was started. When I got to his place he still wasn't up. But I rushed in, and the strange thing was, before I could say anything my tears were just flowing! Uncle sat up in bed in alarm. 'What's happened in the family?' he asked.

"Between sobs I spoke my mind. 'We aren't landlords or rich peasants, neither are we counter-revolutionaries. Year before last, the mutual-aid team didn't want us and left us out. Now the co-op barred us again. Isn't the Communist Party supposed to lead all the poor peasants out of their sufferings?'

"Uncle let out a little sigh, while he pulled his coat on and began to explain. 'Your household wasn't the only one to be refused membership, you know,' he said. 'Besides, there were many pairs of eyes at the

meeting and everyone thought your father was worried about joining, anyway. How about you?'

"'Me?' I retorted. 'What right have they to say I don't want to join the co-op?' Really I was furious and suspected that Hsieh Kai-tai was behind all this. But uncle smiled very kindly and wanted me to tell him what the advantages were of joining the co-op. He was trying to test me. Well, even if dad hasn't discussed the question of joining the co-op with me so often, I would have still had heaps to say in favour of socialism, because we'd been talking about it in our village for close to three years and I'd heard a lot about it here and there. . . . Then I told uncle why dad had fidgeted so.

"'This really is a pretty mess,' uncle sighed and said as if to himself: 'We have 49 households already and if we want 50 or more, we've got to get permission from the Regional Party Committee. Oh, you little silly!' Suddenly uncle got annoyed with me. 'You know perfectly well how muddled your father gets, and yet you stay home all the time like a bride. . . .' And uncle went on criticizing me! I wanted very much to talk back. No, I wouldn't let him think badly of me. But I could say nothing; I started crying all over again. . . ."

Lu Chia-hsiu was silent for a few minutes, her large eyes shiny as she stared in front of her. She was obviously moved but in a happy sort of way. I remembered the Party secretary had told me that morning her uncle had done a lot in teaching her new things. I realized that this talk she was mentioning was one that had made a deep impression on her.

"Now come to that, I was silly," she smiled in recollection. "Why was I so fond of crying? After I'd had my cry, I turned round and walked home. I forgot even to ask whether we could join the co-op or not. When I got home, dad scolded me for being so wild, dashing out of the house as soon as I'd got up. I only shut up like a clam. By mid-morning uncle came. He told us he had discussed the matter with the co-op chairman and that we could apply again to the Party branch. . . .

" 'But you must be prepared for a refusal,' uncle said. 'You know if the co-op takes in fifty households, we've got to have the Regional Party Committee's approval. Another thing, even if you are refused, you must see to it that this girl gets out to meetings more. You shouldn't shut her up so much.' Dad said nothing, just listened half-heartedly. I couldn't help telling them to their faces: 'If we can join, then I'll become a co-op member too! Who's going to shut me up then? Now, dad, let's get this clear while uncle's here. Of course, I shall do as much as I can for my brothers and little sister, but I won't be tied down at home all day long.' "

"Listen to her, comrade!" the father said in self-defence. "She sounds as if I'd tried to shut her up by force."

"Perhaps you didn't try to shut me up," the daughter said half teasingly, "but you sure did leave the little ones completely to me."

"What?" the father asked. "Didn't I tell you to bother less about the house?"

"Sorry, dad, but that was after we'd applied to join the co-op. You can't imagine, comrade, what he was like before. He was so afraid that we couldn't get in, he kept pestering me all day long. As soon as uncle had walked out of our courtyard he urged me to go after him. It got so people were laughing at me and calling me uncle's Little Tail. Once uncle had to attend a meeting of the Party branch in town. Dad was at me again, 'Why don't you go with him, quick?' I was stitching shoe soles then, so I dropped the work without even bothering to stick the needle in securely. I was out of breath by the time I caught up with uncle. He turned round and asked me, 'Hello there, what's it now?' I just panted in reply: 'I'm going to the meeting with you.' By his smile I could tell he had misunderstood me again, because it wasn't the first time I'd followed him around. But this time, he didn't make me go back, he let me walk along with him. He told me about lots of things on the way and encouraged me to try and join the Youth League. We walked like this for nearly two miles. . . ."

Suddenly the father sighed. But then he brightened up. "It was lucky for us she got to that meeting in town!"

"Yes, it was a piece of luck," Lu Chia-hsiu confirmed. "As soon as we got to town, uncle met two men he knew. They talked and talked on their way to the township government offices. Uncle forgot all about me, so I followed them in. After the meeting began, I stayed close by uncle. The chairman was a big man but he spoke ever so gently. Later I found out it was the Party secretary. He said a lot, mainly

about setting up and expanding co-ops. When he'd finished, I could hold on to myself no longer. I sprang to my feet. 'I'd like you people here to tell me why we shouldn't be admitted into the co-op? We've got several little children at home, and only half a draught animal. . . .' Everybody's eyes were on me then. Suddenly uncle turned to me: 'Hey, you strange girl! Don't you know this is a Party branch meeting? . . .' And everyone burst out laughing.

"While he was still scolding me, uncle walked up to the Party secretary. My face was burning and there was a buzzing in my ears. I didn't know whether to get out or what, I just stood there, dumb. After a while the Party secretary came towards me smiling. Uncle was right behind him, looking very pleased too. The secretary asked me briefly about our family, then he said soothingly: 'Tell your dad not to worry. I'm going to a Regional Party Committee meeting. I'll get your family into the co-op, even if I have to do some weeping. . . .'"

"Well, so you did get into the co-op at last!" I exclaimed.

"Oh, no! Not quite yet," the father said, although he was smiling about it. "Ask her."

"There was a little fuss," she recalled. "One day I heard that the co-op was collecting seed from the members. Dad and I worked out what our share should be and the two of us carried the sacks over. Who could have expected that Hsieh Kai-tai, who was one of the vice-chairmen of the co-op, would even

refuse to accept our seed grain! Some time later, when the Party secretary reported to us all what Chairman Mao had said about conservatism in the movement towards agricultural co-operation, I was tempted to say to that man: 'You see now? And you made it so hard for us only the other day!'

"At the time, dad wanted to leave and bring in the seed only when our application had been formally approved. But I wouldn't budge. I said, 'The Party secretary himself told me that he'd get us in, even if he had to do some weeping. . . .'

"Hsieh Kai-tai cut in: 'Too bad I didn't hear him say that too!'

" 'You don't mean I'm lying about it, do you?' I was getting pretty mad. 'He said it in front of everyone at the Party meeting. . . .'

"Some of the co-op members standing around us then said to me: 'You're young and light-footed—why don't you run down and get him?'

"Hsieh Kai-tai said angrily, 'The Party secretary's gone to a meeting. Even if he did give you his word, you'll still have to wait for the permission of the Regional Party Committee. . . .'

"At this point, the co-op chairman arrived with uncle. Hsieh Kai-tai started to speak before they had time to open their mouths. I was thinking to myself: 'No matter what you say, I'm going to hand in the seed today.' " Chia-hsiu smiled, as if a little embarrassed at the recollection, before she continued. "You see, I thought as long as we could make them take

our seed, we'd still be able to get into the co-op, even if our application were rejected. To my surprise, that Hsieh Kai-tai didn't say a word more as soon as uncle started explaining. From then on, everything went smoothly. . . ."

"You've forgotten the peas," her father prompted.

"Oh, yes, that! We had already sorted out our peas to be used as seed, but by mistake a few worm-eaten ones had got in. Hsieh Kai-tai would not accept them. So I said, 'That's simple, I'll take the lot to the river right now and sort them all over again.'"

Then Lu suddenly stood up with a broad grin on his face, looming like a slender pillar. "Comrade," he said. "Even the sun co-operated and shone warmly that day. The wet peas dried in no time at all. . . ."

"You'd deserved a little luck!" I couldn't help laughing. "So you finally got into the co-op."

"Naturally," Lu said. "Now, I'm not worried about anything any more."

"Oh dad, you're making things sound too easy," Lu Chia-hsiu sighed. "Do you think there'll be no more problems once the co-op is set up, and all we have to do is sit and wait for a bigger harvest? Last week a meeting of co-op officers was called to discuss the question of linking land. One of the production team leaders wouldn't come even though we called for him several times. First he said he was in bed already, then he said he wasn't feeling well. If team leaders don't attend meetings, how can this land be linked? He was letting people down; it put every-

body's back up. Someone suggested to postpone the meeting until the next day, but the three chairmen would not have it. Uncle then suggested that we again send for the missing production brigade leader and, if necessary, carry him to the meeting bodily. When I heard this, I jumped up and said I'd like to go. Then another co-op member thought it was better for the two of us to go, since it was dark. Uncle said: 'You must get him to come at all costs, there's going to be a frost.' We wasted a lot of breath before we got him there, and all along the way he was grumbling. . . ."

"The fellow's got a lot of skill in farming," Lu acknowledged with a sigh. "The only trouble is he's so difficult to get along with."

"Actually, there's nothing very much wrong with him," Lu Chia-hsiu said confidently. "His team's got the wheat sown already, and he's coming on pretty well too. But we spent two whole evenings on meetings just because of him. The Party secretary told us we mustn't allow bad styles of work to creep into our new co-op. That man wasn't the only trouble either. We had some more a few days ago with someone else, by the name of Lo Ming-yu. . . ."

"Wasn't he the team leader before you took over?" I asked Lu Chia-hsiu.

"So you've heard about him already? I've been so worried about it all I can't sleep. . . ."

Lu Chia-hsiu made a face, her brows knit. But from the way she spoke and carried herself I gathered that she had enough confidence in herself as team

leader. It was clear she would do her job well, so sensible and full of spirit as she was. I recalled what the Party secretary had told me about Lu Chia-hsiu. "You know, comrade, during the land reform many people thought I'd made great progress, and very quickly. But compared with this chit of a girl, I can hardly claim any progress at all. . . ."

December 1955

A DAY ON POHAI CO-OP FARM

Lin Yuan

Seven villages stand on the gently curving shore of Pohai Bay in Funing County, Hopei Province. Away to the south stretch the beautiful blue waters of the bay. North, east and west of them is a great expanse of rich farmland. Watered by a newly dug canal and a network of irrigation ditches, the land belongs to a large co-op farm. This was formed in 1954 when 734 households—3,200 souls—voted to pool their land and put it under a single management. They decided to name the farm after the great bay that fronts it.

Just before sunrise the village bells pealed, waking the countryside. When the eastern sky glowed red with the dawn, they pealed again. By then the villages were astir. Members of the co-op's thirty production brigades were already on their way to work. Ploughmen were harnessing their horses to new double-share ploughs. Women were threading their way along the rows of snow-white cotton picking the fluffy bolls. Shepherds were driving their flocks to pasture. . . .

TWO FIELDS

It was late autumn. The fields were a waving sea of golden rice and maize. On one newly harvested

plot a dozen co-op members were hard at work uprooting maize stumps. They were in keen but friendly competition. A shout came from the farmyard. An old man working there called out that he'd seen a rabbit. The young chap who was in the lead straightened up, turned round and stared curiously to see what was up. In the instant he was outstripped, to the huge amusement of the rest. Before the breakfast hour they had cleared two acres.

In the field next to them, a middle-aged peasant and a young girl worked at the same task. This was Yang Chih-yi: he was only fifty-three and had been a middle peasant since before the liberation and the land reform, but he bent so despondently over his mattock that he looked like a chess player playing a losing game. Yang had a family of three, eighteen *mou* of land, a cow, and a pretty good show of farm tools. He was a hard worker and a knowledgeable farmer; he'd always been able to get a better yield than most of his neighbours; he used to get some 60 catties more *kaoliang* (sorghum) a *mou* than most others and was a bit cocky about it.

When Pohai Co-op was being organized, Yang was asked to join, but he turned down the proposal impatiently with the comment: "Too many cooks spoil the broth! I'll wait a year at least, to see what the lot of you turn out."

The same year, drought hit the area. The co-op mobilized its members to save the crops, to dig wells, to husband each drop of moisture. Yang too did his utmost, but he had to admit that the co-op was more successful in the struggle than he. In 1955, he worked

hard too to raise a better crop of maize than the co-op, but again he had to admit himself the loser. The co-op topped his yield by 130 catties to the *mou*. The co-op had planted its maize on fields that had been allowed to lie fallow after the autumn ploughing. Yang, busy with other farm work during and after the harvest, had no time for extra ploughing. Besides, in the spring sowing the co-op ploughed its land once again with heavy, double-wheel double-share ploughs which cut deep furrows. Yang had only been able to use his old-fashioned plough which did little more than scratch the surface.

Now as Yang uprooted the stumps in his field he could not help casting an envious eye at the cheerful co-op members who had quickly finished their work and gone home to breakfast.

ON THE THRESHING GROUND

Pohai Co-op has 30 production brigades, each with a threshing ground of its own. And all of them were equally busy. In some, members were threshing peanuts or maize, in others, shelling beans.

On one threshing ground 90 co-op members were busy threshing rice. The work was well organized. There were nine threshing machines run off a Diesel engine. A dozen women worked at each thresher. They wore head scarfs and aprons, and goggles to protect their eyes. Beside each was a constantly replenished pile of rice sheaves. These they took up with their left hand, held and shook them on the revolving drum of the thresher so that the heavy

rice grains were shaken out, then with their right hand tossed the threshed sheaf aside as their left hand reached for another.

The workers who brought the sheaves in from the fields, piled them handy to the threshers, and stacked the straw after threshing, and those who gathered up the threshed grain, all worked with the same labour-saving efficiency. The clatter of the machines, the chug of the engine, the chatter and chaff of the workers gave the yard and air of gaiety as well as bustling good husbandry. The very rice stalks seemed to dance on the thresher.

The good collective management of the pooled fields and the members' enthusiasm gave good results. In 1955 the farm got an average yield of 540 catties of rice to the *mou* — 37 per cent more than the year before. The total grain output of the farm was 4,120,000 catties. After the members had taken out enough for their own food and for seed, the co-op had more than half of this amount to sell to the state.

WORK FOR ALL

The horses were at work, the cattle and sheep had been driven out to pasture, so the stables were quiet except for the crunch of the blade of a cutter going through bales of hay. A white-haired old man and a sturdy young lad were busy at work next to the cow-shed. The old man put the hay under the blade which the young man swung down rhythmically. In a few minutes they had cut quite a heap.

The young man was blind! Before the co-op was formed he used to help the fishermen haul in their nets. But in winter he usually had nothing to do since he had not been taught a trade. So, his earnings were scanty. When he joined the co-op he was given special consideration. Often he did work such as this with the old man, and by helping each other—one providing the sight and the other the strength—they could make good earnings. On occasion blind Chen Shun-hsiang could run up one and a half days' work-points in a single day. On a big co-op farm like this there were plenty of other odd jobs that the old man could do and these brought him in quite a bit, too.

In the old days these two had thought themselves almost useless. Now they had no such misgivings. They were full of confidence in the future.

IN THE OFFICE

In the office, the management committee of the co-op—the chairman, his assistant and other committee members—were holding their second day's meeting to work out an over-all plan for the farm. This was important as it would determine what work the farm could do in the coming year and how to do it. The district committee of the Communist Party had also asked them for information on their concrete plans to increase the co-op membership and raise output. Now they were working out the answers.

The better yields which the co-op was getting, and the increasing prosperity its members were enjoying had encouraged more and more of the farmers there-

abouts who still worked on their own to apply for membership. Yang Shao-tseng was one of the better-off. He'd hesitated to join before because he was afraid things mightn't turn out well. But facts were facts and now he was applying for membership. He'd written that he was willing to sell his cattle, cart and bigger farm tools to the co-op, and invest all his savings in it as well. He was only one of several new applicants. It was clear the peasants were eager to join and that the influx of new members could be coped with; so the Pohai Co-op committee decided that by 1957, the last year of the First Five-Year Plan, the membership could be increased to 1,006 households. That meant over 90 per cent of all the households in the seven villages. The co-op farm would increase its land under cultivation from some 12,000 *mou* to over 17,000 *mou*; on top of that, it planned to reclaim 1,600 *mou* of wasteland and raise its grain output to 7,450,000 catties. The co-op members would raise 2,500 head of sheep and pigs and also plant trees on 250 *mou*. So the list of improvements ran on.

WHEN THE SUN GOES DOWN

After work and the evening meal, most of the co-op members relaxed for a bit either in their homes or in the co-op club, looking over a book or magazine or playing a game of chess or cards. There was nearly always something worth hearing on the wireless. The youngsters, of course, were usually off to the playgrounds for volleyball or basketball. Later in the evening, by moonlight or without, they congregated by

twos and threes in the meeting places of the various brigades to discuss the work of the day and plans for the morrow.

The office of brigade No. 8 was soon filled with people. The brigade leader and work-point tallyman were seated at the table in the middle of the room near the lamp. The brigade leader briefly reviewed the work of the day. Then the whole brigade took part in assessing the work. As each name was called out, members expressed their opinion on the work done.

"Chu Hai-chen," the tallyman called out.

"He worked fast and did a good job clearing the maize field. I propose ten points for him," said a member (ten points are the equivalent of a full work day).

As no one opposed the proposal, it was carried.

"Chin Teh-tseng."

"Just as good as Chu!" said someone. But a young man named Li interposed:

"He's fast, yes. But not so thorough." These two opinions led to some lively discussion.

"Oh, let him have ten points!" an impatient member suggested.

But another young man objected.

"It's not a question of 'let him have,' but whether his work is worth it." It was clear the off-handed attitude of the last speaker wasn't satisfactory to him.

Finally the brigade leader summed up the discussion. He pointed out that Chin Teh-tseng had shown the right spirit in emulating Chu, but he had gone in

for speed rather than quality. As this was the first time, however, he should be awarded the full ten points, but if he repeated his mistake, he wouldn't get the same consideration again. This suggestion was unanimously approved.

And when all the day's work had been assessed the brigade passed on to an animated discussion of the next item: "Work for tomorrow."

January 1956

HE REJOINS THE CO-OP

Kung Chiai-ping

Early in 1953 when a trial agricultural producers' co-operative was first formed in Shawo Village in Shantung Province, Chang Hsiang-ho became one of the members. At that time he had no clear idea of what benefits the co-op would bring him, and was worried whether the cadres had enough experience to make a good job of the co-op. If he pooled all his land as shares he would have to make a living out of work-points. With eight mouths to feed and few in the family who could work, he was really afraid of starving. He dared not put in all his land as shares in the co-op. Out of his nine and a half *mou* of cultivated land and half a *mou* planted with vegetables, he only pooled seven *mou* and kept the rest for his own use. "It would be nice if the co-op works out well and has a big harvest," he said to himself. "If it does badly, I shall still have two and a half *mou* of my own. I can grow sweet potatoes on one *mou* and millet and *kaoliang* on the rest. In this way at least we won't starve."

Though the co-op in Shawo Village was a new one, it had abundant manpower at its disposal. It also owned good draught animals and new farm implements. When spring came it began ploughing and

sowing three to five days earlier than the unorganized peasants, its land was ploughed one to two inches deeper and more fertilizer was used. While spring ploughing was in full swing, the co-op sank three wells and installed three water-wheels which safeguarded more than 30 *mou* of terraced land from drought. It also had more technical guidance. High-grade seeds of *kaoliang* and millet were used. Most of the co-op members realized that the co-op was doing better than the mutual-aid teams. Chang Hsiang-ho also began to see the benefits of a co-op. But since he had kept so much land for himself, he had to work on his own land when the co-op members were busy ploughing. If he waited to till his own land until the co-op work was finished it would get too dry. On the other hand, if he ploughed his own land first, the co-op ploughing would be finished before he was through and he would be unable to earn any work-points. To solve his dilemma he took his son out of school to help him. Even so the final result was that not only was his own land poorly cultivated but the family earned very few work-points. He felt injured.

It rained quite heavily that summer. The co-op was a bit too slow to do the weeding and the sweet potatoes suffered. Chang Hsiang-ho became very worried. He grumbled: "Is this the way to run a co-op? The land is being ruined." The co-op had sown more than 30 *mou* with Golden Queen maize. It was planted according to the new "close planting" method and plenty of chemical fertilizer had been applied. The stalks grew up dark green but the ears were rather slow to develop. Some of the villagers

said angrily, "The stalks look all right but they are planted too closely. They may not grow any ears at all." Chang Hsiang-ho did not know much about growing maize, and when he heard this, a shiver ran down his spine and made him despair: "I'm finished this time," he said to himself. "I'd better withdraw from the co-op before it is too late."

Autumn harvest soon came round. The yield of millet was lower than usual because of the heavy rain. Chang Hsiang-ho's first share was three hundred catties of coarse grain. His wife complained: "Look! You pooled all that land but only get this bit of coarse grain. How are we going to live? On your work-points, I suppose! I told you last spring not to join the co-op, but you seemed bewitched. Now, see what you have done!" Chang Hsiang-ho felt downcast. "The sweet potatoes were damaged," he calculated. "The maize probably won't grow any ears, and the yield of millet is so low. There is no telling if the other crops will be any better." Annoyed by his wife's grumbling, he could no longer control his anger. "All right, don't make such a fuss," he barked at his wife. "I'll withdraw from the co-op tomorrow." He had thus made up his mind. But he was not sure he was doing the right thing, so he quietly ran over to his father-in-law to discuss the matter. It would have been better if he had not gone to his father-in-law, for it was like pouring gasoline on the burning fire. His father was against the co-op. So Chang Hsiang-ho left the co-op before the autumn harvest was finished.

As most of the autumn crops had not yet been harvested, the co-op could not settle his account right away. So it was decided he would receive his share after the harvest.

When he left the co-op, he fully expected to do better on his own. He was strong and considered one of the most experienced peasants in the village. His son was already grown up and had been working quite well in the fields for a year now. Surely he and his son could manage their nine and a half *mou* without difficulty. Even if they did not do too well, they would certainly do better than if they were in the co-op. Chang Hsiang-ho thought that things were simple enough, but they did not turn out as he expected. Before Chang Hsiang-ho was ready to do the autumn ploughing and sowing, the co-op had already started. The wheat sowing was completed in only five or six days. The two piles of manure which looked like little hills were quickly carted to the fields.

But things were not so easy with Chang Hsiang-ho. He owned neither a cow nor a donkey. How could he plough? As to buying a draught animal, he could not even afford a donkey, let alone a cow. The farm tools were also a problem. All he had was an old plough. Finally the co-op helped him plough his land and sow the wheat.

Compared with the wheat of the co-op, however, his proved to be rather poor. The co-op applied thirty-seven carts of night-soil to each *mou* of wheat in addition to urine which they bought from a middle school nearby and applied with a spray. It was also planned that after the Spring Festival each *mou* would

be given thirty catties of chemical fertilizer and that it would all be watered again. (There were three water-wheels in the co-op and six more were to be bought after the Spring Festival.) Chang Hsiang-ho was rather hard up, he could only afford to apply fifteen carts of night-soil on each *mou*. He could not afford any chemical fertilizer, nor could he water his fields, as he did not have a single well.

The co-op's wheat shot up thick, shining and dark green. They expected at least five hundred catties per *mou*. Chang Hsiang-ho's wheat turned out to be yellow and thin. One hundred and fifty catties per *mou* would be the most he could expect. When winter set in, the co-op members were busy digging ditches so that the fields would not suffer from waterlogging. But Chang Hsiang-ho had trouble. Three *mou* of his land were inundated every year. With the normal rainfall, this bit of land would only produce three to four hundred catties of grain annually; but if the rainfall was heavy, he would not get a single grain from this land. Suppose he had a ditch to divert the water, at least twelve or thirteen hundred catties could be produced. He knew well enough that to dig a ditch would increase the output, but he could not afford to dig one.

During the slack months in the winter, the co-op set up oil, flour and beancurd shops where the members could work and earn extra wages. Chang, together with his wife, son and daughter, had formerly worked in these shops, and had earned more than twenty catties of grain a day. After they pulled out of the co-op, they lost this income too. Faced with

so many difficulties, Chang Hsiang-ho said with deep regret: "Everything goes on so well when one is in the co-op but lots of troubles come one's way when one is out of it."

Finally the harvest was finished. Only the millet yield had fallen, all the other crops showed a big rise compared with 1952. Distribution of the whole harvest to the members on the basis of the year's work was made, and the accounts of those who had withdrawn from the co-op were also settled. Chang Hsiang-ho received a total of more than 2,700 catties of grain. Because of his frequent absence from work, what he earned was eight hundred work-points (equivalent to eight hundred catties of grain), less than another member's whose land shares and manpower were the same as his.

Looking at the cobs of maize as big and strong as cudgels, and the big, round sweet potatoes which also came as his share, Chang Hsiang-ho couldn't help feeling remorseful. He not only regretted that he had withdrawn from the co-op, but was sorry that he had kept so much land for himself. He did not dare think of the future working on his own. The year before he did not have enough for food and in the winter he spent quite a lot on his son's wedding. In addition to spending all his savings, he ran into debt. He had only about a thousand catties of grain left. He worked out he could pay off his debts by selling the grain but then he would have nothing left to eat. On the other hand if he kept the grain, he would be unable to pay off his debts. As long as the debts were not cleared, he would have to keep on paying in-

terest. There seemed to be no end to his difficulties. His crops might fail if he did not work well. Chang Hsiang-ho said ruefully: "If I keep on like this, I'll have to sell my land in less than a year, and within three years I'll be living in the same poverty-stricken manner as before the land reform."

Then he came to understand the real advantages of the co-op and began to have a warm feeling towards it. When there was anyone around, he felt too shy to go near the co-op; but when nobody was there, he would walk over to the co-op stable and have a look at his favourite cow. She looked well-fed. As soon as Chang approached her she mooed and stretched her head across the trough as if to greet him. Chang Hsiang-ho stroked her fondly and murmured: "You'd better not be so nice to me. I used to be your master but I'm not any more." Then he turned to look at the six big donkeys which had all grown fat. In the shed the big new cart stood in the same place he had seen it last. The more he looked at these things, the less he could tear himself away from them.

His wife, who had once been so anxious to drag him out of the co-op, now seeing the big maize and the fat sweet potatoes piled up under the eaves and on the *kang*,[1] regretted that she had persuaded her husband to leave the co-op and sometimes even shed tears that she could have been so silly. Fortunately in November 1953, the co-op urged those who had with-

[1] *Kang* is the heated raised platform of brick or clay found in the northern parts of China.

drawn to come back. Chang Hsiang-ho immediately rejoined.

The day of his return, the whole family was as happy as if they were celebrating a feast day. They held a family meeting to discuss how much work each of them could do in the coming year. They also pledged themselves to work better so as to fulfil their production plan. In order to do their part in support of national construction, they decided after discussion that they would save five hundred catties of grain to sell to the state. Having learnt through his own experience in leaving and rejoining the co-op, and inspired by the great things that were going on in the country, Chang Hsiang-ho flung himself into the work with fresh energy.

Soon the co-op began to work on soil improvement by spreading a layer of mud on the sandy land. Leaders in the co-op called on all members to help move the mud in wheelbarrows. The day work started Chang Hsiang-ho had already made one round trip before anyone else reached the fields. He moved eleven barrows to everyone else's ten throughout the job.

In December 1953, when a stove was being built, everyone was in favour of using new bricks. But Chang Hsiang-ho did not like the idea of such extravagance, maintaining that broken bricks would do just as well. He led the members to a pile of rubble left after they had sunk a well and there they picked up broken bricks to make the stove. They thus saved more than one hundred and thirty new bricks.

He also showed his love for his work in what he did for the sweet potatoes. Though there was a big

crop that year, the tendrils were neglected. They were allowed to creep in all directions and covered more than one *mou* of land which could have been used for other purposes. Chang Hsiang-ho hated to see such waste, so on his own initiative he took several members to tidy them up. The potato leaves they gathered alone were worth over seventy yuan, which was extra income for the co-op. In addition, wages for ten working days were saved and more than one *mou* was now available for planting barley and peas. After Chang Hsiang-ho came back to the co-op, he always worked hard and he stood for the interests of the co-op as a whole, so he was elected unanimously the leader of one of its production brigades.

April 1954

OUT OF THE RICH PEASANTS' SNARES

Li Tung-fu

"By the way, I mustn't forget to tell you," said the chairman of the Five Stars Agricultural Producers' Co-operative. "Even a man like Li Teh-ken **has** changed. He's been to see me three times, quite determined apparently to join our co-op." The chairman had been telling me all about his co-operative, but he felt the information about Li Teh-ken's conversion important enough to interrupt the narrative.

I remembered the man he mentioned. People had told us about him during our visit a year ago, when some of us spent the summer in this village called Liangshui, "Coldwater," in the county of Wenkiang of Szechuan Province. People's comments then had been: "Li Teh-ken's mistaken ideas are deep-rooted. Here we've been liberated for nearly five years, but the knots that still tie him to the landlords and rich peasants are as thick as the hair on a Taoist's head!"

And now the co-op chairman was telling me that Li Teh-ken had changed! I wondered how someone like that could change so suddenly. I asked the chairman if he could arrange for me to see Li Teh-ken. At noon the next day Li turned up. He became more and more excited as we talked of many things, till the whole story tumbled out of him in a torrent.

"There was that year before liberation when I'd rented 25 *mou* of land from the landlord. Our whole family worked as hard as we could, hoping that at last we'd get somewhere that way. But in those days we peasants were always haunted by bad luck. Our land was flooded the year after we'd begun our tenancy. The landlord took no notice of the fact that we'd hardly had any harvest. He collected his rent just as usual. We were left with hardly a single kernel of grain. Not only that. The bogus township administration under Japanese occupation then tried to make us pay the tax the landlord owed on the land which we rented for several years before we became his tenants. Their argument was that 'the tax must be traced back to the land.' Twice they took my father and threw him into jail, for altogether twelve days. The third year the landlord tricked us even more cunningly. He said he wanted to shift his tenants around and, with threats and cajolery, he forced my brother to put his fingerprint to a paper in which he was in fact renouncing our tenant rights to the land. In this way the landlord kept the 15 piculs of rice which we'd paid him as a deposit when we became his tenants. My family was driven out. After that, we came to this village with nothing but our empty hands. Aiya, in those days we weren't even able to hang on to a single pig of our own!

"Came liberation and the rent was reduced, local despots were dealt with. With rents reduced our days became easier. Of course, we were grateful to the

Communist Party for having done all this for us. But I didn't understand Party policy and it didn't enter my head that, come to that, all landlords are alike. I knew that a landlord who had acted the despot in his village should be properly dealt with, but when it came to a particular landlord, for instance, Lo Jui-ting, who was a distant relative of mine . . . why, I couldn't help thinking of him as a relative although he'd exploited me like everybody else, charging high rents and demanding a big deposit before he'd rent me a piece of land. During the movement for the remission of deposits, this Lo Jui-ting sent several trunks of valuables and other things to my house for safekeeping, and I was fool enough to oblige him. The cadres in our village and my neighbours tried to talk to me many times, but I wouldn't own up that I was doing the landlord a favour. In the end, of course, the trunks were found in my house. Gradually I drifted further and further away from the other villagers."

LED ASTRAY BY RICH PEASANTS

Even this lesson failed to make Li Teh-ken see how wickedly shameful and useless a life the exploiting class led. He kept on dreaming of making his fortune.

"After liberation," he went on, "I thought: Now, at last, nobody can oppress and bully me any longer; I can go ahead freely. A rich peasant in our village tickled my ambitions by telling me that tree saplings were worth a lot of money, that a cedar or cypress sapling would bring in about a pint of rice. I talked

it over with my family and promptly started doing business in tree saplings. In the land reform, my family of nine got more than 17 *mou* of land and a house. Life was getting better and better. Then the mutual-aid and co-operation movement began in our village. I felt that a mutual-aid team would limit my scope, so I refused to join.

"About this time, another rich peasant from a neighbouring village tried to talk me into something else again. 'Your tree saplings will never get you as much as you can get in the pig business. I simply take little trips and see where I can pick up fat pigs at a bargain. Then I fatten them up on sweet potatoes, beancake and rice husks. In about two to three weeks, I cart them up to Chengtu to market. Each pig weighs 50 catties or more than when I bought it. There's at least 20 yuan net profit in one good, fat pig!' Such talk fell on willing ears, I was only too eager to make money. I gave up the tree saplings business and followed rich peasant Huang into the pig business. Huang was a sly one. He thought that the peasants don't know the price of anything if they haven't been to market for three days. He sought the peasants out in their homes and persuaded them to sell him their pigs at low prices. Then he'd take the pigs to Wenkiang and Chengtu and sell them at a handsome profit. Pretty soon, the other rich peasant who'd talked me into the tree saplings business also joined him and seven other peasants of our village were tempted to deal in pigs by the rich peasants.

"In the spring of 1953, just about the time for transplanting rice seedlings, I returned from a busi-

ness trip. People in our village were then getting used to planting seedlings closely but in smaller clusters than before. I meant to try this new method like everyone else, but one of the rich peasants kept droning into my ears: 'Plant them sparsely and you'll get an extra picul; plant them closely and you'll have just enough for seed. What's so wonderful about close planting, anyway?' In the end I planted my seedlings in the old way—each cluster more than a foot apart. When harvest time came I got about a peck of grain less per *mou* than my neighbours.

"At the end of that year, the government inaugurated the system of the planned purchase and supply of grain. The peasants in our village cheerfully sold to the state whatever surplus of grain and oil crops they had. However, my family was not keen on selling our grain to the state. We had some rapeseed, but I intentionally held back and would not sell any. I boiled some three pecks on the sly and sprinkled it over the four *mou* of land I'd sown to flax. Unfortunately I put in too much, and quite a bit of the flax I'd sown never came up. The loss I suffered was the equivalent of five pecks of rice. I quickly sowed some more flax, but this time the land wasn't manured right! The flax came up all awry and the harvest I got from the four *mou* was 800 catties less than what I should've got. Altogether I lost over 50 yuan on this deal. The trouble, one after another, that I had with my land, depressed me more and more. But rich peasant Kuo tried to soothe me. 'When the east is dark, face west; when there are no stars, look for the moon! A few extra business trips will bring you

more than what you've lost. Why bother your head about what you've lost on the land?' So he fanned the greed in me till I was caught tightly in his clutches. I forgot all that had happened and followed in his wake again. At first, I only took a turn now and then carrying pigs to market, but soon I got into the rush buying and selling of potatoes, sweet potatoes and other produce with him."

CHANGE OF HEART

When the government was instituting the planned purchase and supply of grain, those who engaged in treacherous rumour-mongering, sabotage and caused other trouble to hinder progress were exposed. In great anger, the people denounced the rich peasant Kuo for sabotaging the planned purchase and supply of grain and the movement towards mutual aid and co-operation. Kuo was taken into custody and duly sentenced to jail. This was a tremendous jolt to Li Teh-ken's conscience.

"I could not sleep the night I heard that Kuo had been sentenced," Li said. "I tossed and turned, and thought of this and that. . . . I suddenly realized that, although I'd kept in with the rich peasants, they'd never really treated me as one of their own kind. Once I'd been able to find a really big, fat pig at a bargain price, but somehow Kuo snatched it up, sold it straight away and made a profit of 20 yuan. Another time Kuo took on the job of moving some timber for somebody. Actually, nearly a dozen of us were in on this job, but he pocketed the whole

30 yuan that were due to us, because he'd contracted for this job in his name only, he said.

"I also thought back to 1953 when the planned purchase and supply of grain first began. Kuo had made out this measure as an attempt to let the people go hungry. He really poisoned my mind against this government policy, so that I didn't want to sell my rape-seed to the state. When I was thinking like this, how I was led astray and what I myself had suffered, I remembered also the trouble this rich peasant had created in the village as a whole. With my own eyes I'd seen him sneak into three mutual-aid teams and then wreck them one after another. These memories made my heart ache with anger; and the more I thought about it all, the angrier I grew. I didn't sleep a wink that night. Early the next morning, I called a family council and we decided, then and there, that our household wouldn't have anything more to do with the exploiting class, once and for all.

"Not long after, a co-operative was organized in our village. I was all in two minds. I wanted to join, but I was afraid I'd come out the loser. One moment I'd worry about my big buffalo which I was sure would be worked to death in the co-operative, another moment I was thinking of the pig feed we had—I was afraid we wouldn't be able to do anything with it in the co-operative and so would lose money on it. After some discussion in the family, although it was raining, we took our 300 catties of sweet-potato tendrils, and sold them dirt cheap for 6 *fen* a catty. However, when the co-operative admitted new members, the people in our village said my household was

not qualified, although they realized that we'd changed and turned our backs on the rich peasants. In their eyes we were still thinking too selfishly. Our application was turned down and we didn't get into the co-operative. Then we had nothing to feed the pigs with—we had to buy back what we'd sold at 11 *fen* per catty!

It may seem advantageous to trade,
But crops are produced with a spade!

"Harvest time rolled round again. Earlier in the year I had stupidly taken the rich peasants' advice and didn't buy any fertilizer for my fields. Now I found that I got about a peck of grain per *mou* less than my neighbours. I did especially bad with a plot near the highway. There my harvest was 1.5 pecks per *mou* smaller. My heart ached as if torn by sharp claws. And when I looked round me, I saw how well the 87 households in the Five Stars Agricultural Producers' Co-operative were doing, all sharing in the big harvest. They had a happy time of it—paying their tax in kind, selling their surplus grain, joining the credit co-op. Everything went swimmingly for them. What amazed me most was how things had changed for my next-door neighbour, a Mrs. Chou. With a family of three and hardly any labour power to speak of, she'd never been able to make ends meet in the past nor pay her tax in kind. Her whole family used to be dressed in rags. In 1954, she not only paid her tax but had surplus grain to sell. I noticed too that she had a brand-new, blue cotton-cloth suit. One evening I slipped over to ask her outright what the

secret of the co-operative's success was and how everyone who joined was able to get a bigger harvest. Mrs. Chou beamed as she replied readily: 'What's so strange about having bigger harvests with all the advantages of a co-op? The many hands in it mean more rational use of labour power. We've cut out the paths that separated the fields, we've joined up irrigation ditches and reclaimed wasteland. Don't you think all that helps to increase the yield? Small plots of land have been turned into big tracts, so now we can use new farm implements, and that means the land is ploughed deeper, raked better and the sowing is done more evenly. Don't you think that too makes for bigger yields? In the co-op we put the land to crops that the soil is suited for, and apply the right kind of fertilizer; manpower is used according to each person's strength and ability, and there's a proper division of work. We even have jobs for the old, the weak and the disabled. So you see, every single person can do the best that's in him. Don't you think that with all these measures it's easy to get bigger and better crops?' Her simple explanation struck home. I thought and thought, and remembered the old saw: 'It may seem advantageous to trade, but crops are produced with a spade!' And 'Pick up a piece of wood outside, only to lose a whole door at home!' The peasant's job is to work hard on the land. In this way, he can do well for himself as well as by his country.

"Since then, everyone in my family has worked harder on the land. One day my brother and I were at our flax fields. I happened to look up and saw two fellows from the Five Stars Co-op leading two strong buffaloes down the road. Both of us stared with envy. 'Now, where would the co-op get such handsome animals?' I wondered to myself. When they came nearer, I asked and found that the co-op had sold an old buffalo some days ago and that they were now buying these two strong, young buffaloes instead with another 350 yuan in cash. 'When that buffalo of ours gets too old,' said I, 'how will we, a single household, be able to get a replacement? We are few in number and weak in strength.' My brother agreed. 'If we hadn't got fooled by the rich peasants, we would've been in the co-op long ago. Now we must turn round and take the bright road and join the co-op.'

"We were still talking like this when I suddenly heard a gurgling sound. I turned and discovered that the water of the irrigation ditch had broken through a hole that had probably been made by yellow eels, and was flowing on to the co-op's newly sown flax fields. The two of us immediately jumped across the ditch and, with our bare hands, managed to stop the leak. We were horrified at the thought that the flax fields might be flooded. After all, we were going to belong to the co-op some day, too! We couldn't stand by and let the crops of the co-op suffer. . . ."

Early this year, Li Teh-ken invited the chairman of the co-operative to his home several times for a

pipe and chat. Each time he began the conversation with, "Comrade chairman, when are you going to admit new members to the co-op?" and when he saw his guest to the door he reminded him again: "Please don't forget us when you enlarge your membership this time!"

March 1955

A VILLAGE IN HONAN

Li Chun

The village of Ssu Ma lies at the foot of Mangshan, south of the Yellow River and west of the city of Chengchow in the province of Honan. According to the old people thereabouts they hadn't known real peace for scores of years. Fighting between warlord bands, landlords' armies and bandits was the order of the day. Then, when the Japanese invaders crossed the Yellow River, matters grew even worse. They never knew where the next blow would fall.

After liberation things took a decided change for the better. The old days when many people had nothing but coarse bran and wild herbs to eat for six months in the year were over. Old folks in their eighties who never knew the comfort of padded clothes in winter are now warmly clad in neat clothes of good quality. Beggars and loafers belong to the dead past, and feudal customs are gradually giving place to new.

CHANGING CUSTOMS

In the old days, birth, marriage and death were, every one of them, the occasion for a vast amount of ritual and ceremony and, to put it bluntly, a mass of ridiculous and superstitious observances which had

to be observed for form's sake. All this ran away with vast amounts of money when there was little enough to spare for bare necessities. A family might well, and often did, beggar itself over a marriage or a funeral. The peasants of Ssu Ma used to put it crudely: "Marry a wife, lose the chance of buying an ox." Peasants used to save for years before they could get married, and they would still be paying for the wedding long after they had reared a family. It was just as bad marrying off a daughter. She had to be given a dowry, and that meant borrowing here, there and everywhere, even when there wasn't a scrap to eat at home.

Now the marriage situation is quite different. People take a more rational attitude, and prefer to give a young couple a good send-off rather than pour much needed cash down the drain. A young fellow who had recently got married and the mother of a recent bride both told me the weddings had cost less than 20 yuan—well under two weeks' income. Once the bride and bridegroom had to ride in gorgeously decked sedan-chairs. Now they spruce themselves up, perhaps with a big red peony pinned to their breasts, and go off together to their new home in a mule-drawn cart belonging to the local co-op.

Then funerals. The old ideas of "doing the right thing by the dead" were carried to such extremes that a funeral could mean a load of debt for years to come. It was bad enough in a small family; but deaths in a large family were crippling. From far and near relations and relatives would flock in. On arrival every one would have to be given good dinners and yards

of mourning cloth. The old custom demanded that all close relations of the deceased should wear caps and long gowns of this white cloth, white being the colour of mourning in China. It was a coarse, thin fabric woven for this purpose and not fit for anything else. Incredible amounts of cotton were woven into this mourning cloth. In the case of a woman's death, her mother's family could demand, and get, all sorts of elaborate rites.

All this, too, is changed. Nowadays funerals are conducted with simple but moving ceremonies, with the children and near relatives coming to pay their last respects. Mourning cloth is no longer in use: every mourner wears a white paper flower, and none of the old ceremonial burning of paper horses and incense is followed. One of the peasants told me that after his grandmother's death they were afraid that her brothers would come and find fault with shroud or coffin, so he went to the Peasants' Association for advice. The Association reassured him: he should do as he thought best, and they would try to explain matters and see that there was no interference. In the event, no one did come to complain: the new ways are beginning to be taken for granted.

SUPERSTITIONS ABANDONED

Like many villages in Honan, Ssu Ma is surrounded by a wall which was originally built as protection against bandit attacks. In the past the wall was pierced by two gates only, one east and one west. But most of the peasants' fields lay to the south of

the village, which meant that they had to make a great detour to get to the fields for ploughing, sowing or carting fertilizer. It was generally agreed that a south gate was badly needed, but the landlords sat on the idea: who knew, they said, what gods might be offended if the old order were interfered with, or what disasters might befall. So nothing came of it. Then came the land reform, and the power of the landlords was broken. In 1953 a farming co-operative was formed in the village, and the chairman raised anew the question of cutting a fine, wide south gate through the wall. This was approved and done, and at the same time a couple of acres were laid out as a spacious threshing ground just outside the gate.

It may seem strange that so useful a piece of work should have been delayed so long because of the influence of old wives' tales. But in the old days the peasants clung to the old almanacs which indicated which days were propitious for certain undertakings and those on which hostile forces were supposed to hold sway. It was firmly believed that if these taboos were infringed, certain disaster would follow. Needless to say, landlords and exploiters used these superstitions for all they were worth. You couldn't even build a cow-shed without consulting the almanac, and even then you had to plaster the walls with written notices to placate some gods and warn off others! The formation of the village co-ops went a long way to break down these ideas. It was common sense that you couldn't cast a horoscope for an entity like a co-operative, and when the co-op went ahead building houses and cow-sheds without ever consult-

ing the almanac and without any untoward aftermath, it made you think!

In 1953 the peasants in the village got an improved type of water-wheels on loan from the government. When wells were to be sunk for installing these water-wheels, a number of old fogeys cut in with a warning that sinking wells on the east side would inevitably bring bad luck. So, many old folks held back from fear, and refused to give a hand on the job. The young people didn't believe a word of all this, they just took up hoes and spades and had their wells sunk. Today almost all the fields in the village are being irrigated, thanks to these water-wheels. And the old folks are wiser now.

I found out another, rather amusing, example of this in Ssu Ma. Nearly all the villagers shared the same family name—Hou. The pronunciation of this word resembles that of another Chinese character which means monkey. They were a bit touchy about it, and when travelling monkey-trainers used to come to the village, they were ignominiously chased off. Naturally the monkey-trainers gave the village a wide berth; but last autumn one of them passed that way. "Come on in," said the villagers. "Give the kiddies a treat. They can't make monkeys of us nowadays!"

THE PEDLAR

Outside the village school I met an old man peddling paper, Chinese brushes, fountain-pens, ink and so on. I got into conversation with him, and learned that he'd had three different jobs since liberation. Origi-

nally he was an expert in *feng shui*—the superstitious "wind and water" influences which determined the location of graves and so forth. After liberation, the peasants no longer believed in these "wind and water" influences, and he found himself without customers. So, being a small, old-fashioned intellectual, he set up a desk and chair outside the post office to write letters for the illiterate. "At first," he said, "business was brisk. There was a continuous stream of people coming to have letters written." But by 1953 there was a change. The peasants and girls, fountain-pens stuck in jacket pockets, didn't even throw a casual glance in his direction. So he'd had to change to his present trade. "Fountain-pens are a good selling line in the country nowadays," he said with a grin.

All the peasants have learned to read and write now. The local adult school was a great success. I met Tang Shu-lan and Hou Pei-lan, two peasant women who had never had any schooling in the old society. They now knew over 2,000 Chinese characters, and were in charge of the public blackboard news, and their handwriting was a joy to the eye. The village now takes ten copies of the Peking *People's Daily* as well as the provincial paper, the *Honan Daily*, and some sixty copies of the *Masses*, a special periodical for peasants.

I listened to a lecture given to the co-op members by their chairman, Hou Tung-yin, formerly a simple, completely illiterate peasant. Frankly, his talk was far above my head, all about farming technique, use of chemical fertilizers, nitrogen, phosphates, potassium, insecticides and what not; and he put it over

like a specialist in agriculture. That's the sort of change that has come to Ssu Ma.

The village, like its neighbours, has gone in for amateur theatricals in a big way, including local opera. I gathered they hadn't had much difficulty in raising enough instruments for the opera orchestra: there were plenty of gongs, drums and so forth that had been used in the old days for attracting the notice of gods or scaring off devils. The villagers had written a lot of new pieces for themselves, mostly simple in form and plot, and not calling for more than three singers, but all very fresh and lively. Of course they perform the old plays, too.

In some ways I found the village news-boards the most fascinating thing of all. Although there are only about a hundred households, there are seven blackboards for news. They have an "editorial board" run by the peasants themselves, and its leader is an old man, Hou Lu-chin. Hou Lu-chin is a great hand at light verse, and his pungent sallies and lampoons contributed to the blackboards are immensely popular. They cheer the deserving, castigate the idle, expose things which are not as they should be, and generally play their part in showing the way forward to a better life. There was, for instance, "The Cotton Complains," a reminder to those who had been remiss in hoeing the cotton when warm weather followed a spell of rain. It began like this:

Members of the second team,
The cotton complains in tears,
You've not been to the fields for days.

Oh, lend to me your ears!
My lucky lads and lasses,
The weeds are growing high.
They're starving me and choking me:
Come quickly, or I'll die!

Other contributors break into verse, too, for they all appreciate the value and influence of the blackboard news. At the time I was there, somebody had written up:

Blackboard News, Blackboard News,
Tells what everyone's doing, reflects all views!

Films, too, are something fresh in village life. They have a mobile film unit round once or twice a month, and lantern lectures on top of that. By this time some of the villagers are real connoisseurs of what goes to make a good film.

WOMEN COME INTO THEIR OWN

The most astounding change of all in Ssu Ma, perhaps, is the change that has come about in the position of the women. In the old days women in the country had an unenviable lot. They not only had to bear all the other forms of tyranny and oppression along with their menfolk, but on top of all that, the degradation of women which goes with feudalism. They were utterly cut off from all social and community life, and, all too often, got beaten by their husbands as a matter of course.

After liberation, a democratic women's association came into being, and wife-beating came to a

sudden end. I was talking to one woman who told me that her husband used habitually to set about her. "Does your husband still bully you?" I asked. "No fear!" she answered. "He wouldn't dare. Besides, I don't depend on him now. I work in the co-op too, and earn my own food and clothes. Men haven't got the whip hand nowadays."

In the bad old days Spring Festival used to be a particularly trying time for women. The Festival was an excuse for the menfolk to indulge in an orgy of gambling and drunkenness. When they gambled or drank up all their money, they were liable to beat their wives, or even sell their land. So to the womenfolk Spring Festival was a time for apprehension rather than rejoicing. After liberation the rumour went round that any man who gambled would have certain drastic and salutary punishments inflicted on him. One story had it that he'd be made to eat donkey's droppings. I couldn't find out that anyone had actually been dealt with in that way, but I was assured that gambling had come to an end!

Nowadays there is nothing strange in finding women taking the lead in running village affairs. In Ssu Ma the chairman of the Hsinlu Agricultural Producers' Co-operative is a woman, and so are four of its brigade leaders. For a young woman to be in a position where her husband's father has to come to her for orders, for a husband to have his own wife as "foreman," is something that would have been quite unthinkable in the old days. At first some of the men found the new order embarrassing, but now they

take it as a matter of course. Merit is what counts, and sex doesn't come into it.

ALL WORKING TOGETHER

In the countryside today, people are judged by their work. Those who content themselves with loafing around are generally frowned upon. Here in Ssu Ma Village, good, honest work has become a habit with all. Everywhere you find men and women, young and old, working happily together and sharing the same joy of labour.

The feudal, backward village which we remember is gone for ever. In its place blossoms a land of promise, a land full of gaiety and guided by good, new customs. Change is in the air. A fresh atmosphere prevails. The honest, hard-working peasant is master of his own land.

November 1954

CULTURAL LIFE IN LUCHUAN TOWNSHIP

Yi Shui

I went to Luchuan on the outskirts of Peking one evening during the Spring Festival. The square in front of the village school was crammed full of people. There were girls in cotton-padded jackets of colourful prints, husky young men with ruddy cheeks, and women with babes in their arms. Even white-haired old people were in the crowd. Children wove their way in and out, shouting and laughing. Some had fought their way to the front where, at one end of the square, a stage had been improvised. Two large pressure lamps were hissing, throwing their bright light on the stage across which a curtain of white cloth had been drawn. On the curtain, the name of the Luchuan Township Theatrical Company was embroidered in red characters.

At last, the noise in the square died down. A *ping chu*[1] opera called "People Aim Upwards"[2] was

[1] *Ping chu* is a regional type of opera, popular in North China that is very easy to appreciate.

[2] "People Aim Upwards" is a one-act play about Old Sun, a middle peasant—how he vacillates till he finally decides to join the agricultural producers' co-operative. The story shows clearly what sad fate the peasants would meet if they took the road to capitalism; and what a world of difference it is for them to go the co-operative road.

going to be staged. The actors played their parts so naturally, as though re-living their everyday life, that some in the audience whispered to each other: "This is exactly the way it was in our village!" When the leading character, Old Sun, was seen joining the co-operative, the audience began clapping and shouting appreciatively. That night, the audience was also entertained with choruses, vocal solos, dances, quick-patter clapper ballads and instrumental music. The programme lasted well into the moonlit night, but nobody left before the end.

In the old days, landlords were the only ones in the village who could afford to go to an opera or play, and then they had to go to town to do so. The stage was not for the poor, and many a grandpa or granny had never seen a play in all their lives. Now, the inhabitants of Luchuan not only have a good theatrical group of their own, but some professional actors have come from the city to entertain them. I was told proudly that even players from the China Institute of Ping Chu Opera and from the Central Experimental Opera Institute had acted for the village. These two institutes have also helped the village with rehearsals of its amateur group. The success of the play "People Aim Upwards" at this time was actually due in large measure to the help given by the China Institute of Ping Chu Opera, the villagers said.

When I spoke to the village drama group, one of the members told me that it hadn't all been plain sailing at the beginning, especially when women first began to take parts. There was much opposition to seeing women on the stage. The woman who played

the heroine in "The Women's Representative"[1] was a case in point. Her mother-in-law objected to her taking part in the play, scolded her for it and often gave her nothing to eat after she came back from rehearsals. She shed many a tear in secret, but carried on firmly. In the end, the play was a success. At that time, many feudal ideas were still rampant among the villagers. Young girls shied away from playing roles of married women, fearing to be ridiculed; they would rather take male parts. Also, male and female players never even so much as shook hands on stage. It is only now that the villagers have caught up with the times, that social conventions have changed, and that everyone is proud of "their" drama group. Parents now think it a matter of pride to see their offspring perform in public, especially if they do it well. There are no more reproaches for play-acting youngsters and daughters-in-law. The audience approves of male and female players shaking or holding hands. And the players themselves aren't "feudal" any more, either! They know now that anything they do is for the good of their group, hence they don't mind whatever parts they are given.

The Spring Festival is one of the very few holidays in the whole year in the countryside. In these days Luchuan not only is treated to the repertoire of its amateur actors. The cultural centre is buzzing with

[1] "The Women's Representative" is a very popular one-act play about an ordinary peasant woman who defeats feudal tradition successfully and takes part in community work.

many other activities as well. A big stove was blazing forth with warmth when I arrived. At the tables in the centre of the room there were crowds of people. The late-comers had to content themselves with standing-room only along the walls. Some were playing poker, chess or carambole. Others were reading pictorials and illustrated books. Some were singing or telling stories, or simply chatting with each other. The cultural centre attracts all the villagers who have grown into the habit of dropping in during their spare time.

Indeed, the cultural centre is the source of many new and interesting experiences. There are two thousand-odd books on the shelves along the walls and there are many newspapers and magazines on the racks. From all this reading matter, the people of Luchuan have learned many things they never knew before. The young people meet New China's heroes like Tung Tsun-jui and Lo Sheng-chiao, and heroic girls like Liu Hu-lan, as well as those of the Soviet Union, like Zoya Kosmodemyanskaya and Paul Korchagin. The lives of these heroic young people imbue the reader with the sense that there are ideas worth living, working and dying for. Older villagers are interested in better farming methods, in the advantages of co-operation in agriculture. The women like to know how women live and work in the socialist countries, determined to learn from them and emulate them. Picture-story books are a never-ending joy to children.

Books and newspapers are liked by all the people because they contain such rich stores of information.

Each production brigade takes some books or newspapers borrowed from the cultural centre when they go to work in the fields. During the lunch-break, someone with more education will read to the others. Once a Youth League member read his brigade from the newspaper how to trim and cut leaves and branches of a cotton tree. Some of his mates thought it an excellent idea, others were afraid it might ruin the crop. Finally they decided to set aside three *mou* for experimenting. When the plants experimented on proved to be growing exceptionally well the new method was adopted by the whole township. The yield of cotton was thereby raised. In another instance, the same person read his mates an editorial from the *People's Daily* on the prospects of the liberation of Taiwan. This touched off such enthusiasm that the brigade took only half a day weeding an area that used to take them a whole day before.

During the rest hour in the field, there are often short performances of clapper ballads, comic dialogue, story-telling, opera and dancing by the amateur theatrical group. Such goings-on in the fields of the co-operative make the individual peasant, who thinks he can go it alone, green with envy. When one such individual peasant was working in his field with his daughter-in-law and heard the story-telling in a nearby field, he found it so interesting, and his own work so dull by comparison, that it decided him to join the co-op with all his family.

The newspaper reading group visits the peasants' homes too. Around an oil-lamp, the women, old and young sit cross-legged on the *kang* enjoying the peace

and quiet after a hard day's work. The old ones light their pipes as they listen to the reading that takes them out into the big, wide world. Many of the stories they remember for a long, long time. I met a woman in charge of one such community group. The father of this woman who was in her middle thirties used to teach in the old-style village school. From him she had learned to read when she was a little girl. When she married, her mother-in-law was so strict that she was forbidden to read any book or newspaper, and anyway such things were not easily obtainable in the village in those days. So, what little she had learned as a child, she'd forgotten again. When reading circles were established at some of the homes in the village, those who didn't want to go to the cultural centre to borrow books or newspapers thus still found access to them. The librarian of the cultural centre would send reading matter to the person in charge of such a community group, and all those living in the neighbourhood could borrow books at the place nearest them. In this way, every such place became a miniature library. The librarian of the cultural centre happened to live next door to the woman whose mother-in-law had stunted her intellectual growth. The librarian encouraged her to pick up her reading and advised her to borrow books from the cultural centre. But old-fashioned ideas had got hold of Chao Chih-fen—how could a woman go to the cultural centre where there were always men? So the librarian gave her some books and other publications and asked her to take charge of a reading circle at her own home.

Since then, Chao Chih-fen has been reading regularly to her neighbours. She also takes time out to extend her services to the women in another, rather out-of-the-way village. Now she is often seen going to the cultural centre asking for books and other printed matter to take out. She is a voracious reader, reading all that's available, like a starving person would rush at piles of food she suddenly discovered. Her reading includes simplified reading matter as well as novels by contemporary authors, the classics, translations of Soviet literature, and so on. She told me that she has also read the selected works of Mao Tse-tung. In the spring of 1953 she learned of the advantages of co-operation in agriculture from various newspaper articles on the subject. She took it upon herself to persuade her husband to join the co-operative. She also succeeded in persuading other villagers to do so. She likes to tell others that it was, in fact, books and newspapers that got her into the co-op.

Like those of other villages, the inhabitants of Luchuan show particular interest in lantern-slide and film shows. The cultural centre's lantern-slide unit has four showings a month. On such occasions the inhabitants will have an early supper long before dark, to turn up in good time at the home where the lantern-slides will be shown. The children are there even earlier, long before the grown-ups. When the lantern-slide operator and the person who reads the commentary appear with their projector and pressure lamp, they are immediately surrounded by these youngsters who want to know what will be shown that evening.

The narrator whose voice still has a boyish sound tries to quiet the children down in the manner of a people's policeman on traffic duty, shouting at the top of his voice, "Make way, please! You'll damage the projector!" While a white sheet is being hung on the wall, all the space in the room on the floor, *kang* and window-sills is taken, and still there are people trying to push their way in. The bustle and hustle ceases only when the first coloured slide appears on the screen. The villagers like the programme because it often speaks of the things that are part of their lives. "On the Road to Prosperity," "I Chose Mutual Aid and Co-operation" and "The Spark Collective Farm" are some of the most popular shows on the list of the lantern-slide unit.

When a film is shown, practically the whole village turns up to see it and the open lot in front of the village school resembles a noisy market-place. With the aid of an amplifier, the head of the film projection team first gives a synopsis of the film to be shown. Then gramophone records are played, the amplifier adding an unusual tone to the village atmosphere. The ticket sellers are busy and a group of volunteer ushers maintain order. When the front yard of the village school is packed, late-comers are politely turned away, but they still linger a while, reluctant to go. The story the film tells remains a subject of conversation for a long time afterwards. Chinese films like "The White-haired Girl" and Soviet films like "Kuban Cossacks" are those most frequently recalled.

The richer cultural life in Luchuan Township is inseparable from the improvements in the peasants' living standards. The Chenkuang Agricultural Producers' Co-operative in the township has now grown to more than four hundred households. This means almost the entire township has joined the co-operative and thereby markedly improved its life. Before liberation, only the children of landlords and rich peasants could afford any schooling at all. At present, the children of the poor and middle peasants not only go to primary school; many of them go on to middle school—there are a hundred pupils from Luchuan in the middle school nearby. All the younger men and women in the township are attending part-time schools for adults. Many of those who, before liberation, were completely illiterate can now read simply written books and newspapers. What is more, some have become teachers in part-time schools. The township authorities pay particular attention to educational and cultural work. Formerly, the vice-chairman of the co-operative frowned upon members of the co-operative taking their lunch-hour to read newspapers. But when he came to realize the good that co-op members derived from such readings, he gave his full support and attention to cultural work in the village.

During my stay in Luchuan, the Union of Chinese Artists and the People's Fine Arts Publishing House jointly sponsored a mobile exhibition of New Year pictures. In the two days during which the exhibition was on view in the township government building, people kept coming and going in an endless

stream. The villagers scrutinized the pictures one by one, airing their views on them. Those who took a fancy to a particular picture decided to buy a copy at the nearest Hsinhua Bookstore. This timely exhibition of New Year pictures added the last touch necessary to the holiday atmosphere at the Spring Festival in Luchuan.

February 1955

LOOKING AFTER BABIES

Liu Heng

Hsi Cheng-yang, a seventy-six-year-old woman member of the Tsunsheng Agricultural Producers' Co-operative in Santai County, Szechuan Province, has spent all her life looking after babies.

When a mere child of six, Hsi Cheng-yang started carrying her twelve-month-old brother on her back, while she ran around in the courtyard of her home. Later, she helped her mother to bring up four younger sisters. At nineteen, she married a member of the Yang family. Her sister-in-law gave birth to one baby after another, and Hsi Cheng-yang was often called upon to help look after them. Two years later, she herself became pregnant and continued to have one baby after another until she had 14 children. Although only four sons and two daughters survived, all of them had taken up her time and care.

In 1931, her first daughter-in-law gave her her first grandson. "A grandson, and the first born into the family," she kept saying. "My daughter-in-law cannot know how to take care of him, I must take over!" After a few years, her second daughter-in-law brought the second grandson into the family. "A grandson again," she thought. "I'll take care of him, or else my second daughter-in-law will say I have favourites."

Then the third and fourth daughters-in-law also gave birth. And so it went until there were altogether 12 grandchildren. Grandma Hsi's hands were always full.

She joined the mutual-aid team the year before last. One day an old woman living in the adjoining courtyard visited her. Soon they were talking about bringing up babies.

"You've done pretty well so far," said her neighbour. "You have brought up over twenty, I guess?"

"More than thirty!" Hsi Cheng-yang hastened to correct her. Then she smiled.

"You live under a lucky star. I suppose the youngest is already four or five years old? It's time their granny enjoyed a few years' rest!"

"Yes, they have grown up all right—but strange to say, I am beginning to feel awfully lonely without a baby in the house."

While they were still talking, her eldest son, Yang Pang-yuan, came home. He told his mother that the mutual-aid team was going to organize a baby-minding group for the busy season and wanted her help.

"Impossible, impossible!" Hsi Cheng-yang shook her head emphatically. "Those babies are the very life, the apples of their mothers' eyes. How could I look after them?"

"That's easy," said her son. "It's just like taking care of your own grandsons."

"Like taking care of my grandsons!" Hsi Cheng-yang thought to herself. "My son's a mutual-aid team leader now!" And off she went to the baby-minding group to take up her work. In March last year, the mutual-aid team was transformed into an agricul-

tural producers' co-operative. The co-op expanded in January this year from twenty to eighty households, and Hsi Cheng-yang again went to work in the baby-minding group in the expanded co-operative.

"SHE DOES IT BETTER THAN I DO"

The babies were looked after by the old women separately. Hsi Cheng-yang took charge of two of them.

Golden Orchid, daughter of Lai Hsiu-chen, and Fiery Babe, son of Li Su-chun, were both first babies. They were their mothers' darlings; but the women couldn't play with them all the time, they had to go and help in the fields in the busy season. Hsi Cheng-yang took care of them.

Last year, soon after the Grain Rains[1] fell, there was one field job after another crying to be done. The rape-seeds had to be picked after the barley was harvested, and then the wheat had to be cut. Cotton was to follow on the barley field, maize on the rape, and water paddy on the wheat field. Every able-bodied person was needed, and what with harvesting, threshing, ploughing and sowing, they all had their work cut out.

Leaving Golden Orchid with Hsi Cheng-yang, Lai Hsiu-chen went to work in the fields. But Fiery Babe's mother Li Su-chun had her worries: "Any distance away from her child is miles away for a mother. Nobody looks after other people's babies

[1]On April 20 or 21 every year.

properly." She went to cut the wheat with Fiery Babe on her back. With every handful of wheat she cut, Fiery Babe's head knocked against her back. After a while he began to cry and she began to feel tired out. Her work slowed down. Next time Li Su-chun left Fiery Babe at home while she went threshing. Everybody was chatting and laughing at the threshing ground; but Li Su-chun was so worried that she ran home after each day's work without waiting to rest, and sometimes she even went before the work was finished. The baby screamed and screamed. In desperation Li Su-chun gave Fiery Babe to Hsi Cheng-yang to look after.

At first she was filled with anxiety and ran to look at him every time she had a chance.

The first time she went she saw Fiery Babe's face being washed with a new towel. "If he's clean and tidy, the little dear won't fall sick," Hsi Cheng-yang kept repeating.

The second time she went Li Su-chun saw Hsi Cheng-yang giving her baby a piece of sweet. He had been crying for some reason or other but with the sweet in his mouth he gave a broad smile.

Li Su-chun ran home still another time. She saw Hsi Cheng-yang down by the stream washing napkins. The babies were asleep. Li Su-chun felt embarrassed. "Granny," she said, going over to her, "leave those for us when we finish work."

"Aiya! It's nothing. I can easily do them," Hsi Cheng-yang replied.

Li Su-chun stopped running to see her baby after that. What's more, she told everyone she met:

"Ah, she takes better care of them than I do! I'm quick-tempered, you see. When the baby gets into mischief, I become impatient and as often as not I slap him. But think what she does. No matter how long the baby screams, she never shouts and never spanks him."

After that, Li Su-chun went happily to work in the fields without worrying. "Now there's nothing to hinder me or to get on my mind," she said, "and I feel full of energy."

"PULL A VINE AND THE WHOLE TRELLIS SHAKES"

After the autumn harvest last year, Hsi Cheng-yang was made a model worker. In the spring of this year, before the busy season started, she went to the baby-minding group and continued to look after Golden Orchid and Fiery Babe. Both babies grew well under her care. When she talked about them to others her joy was boundless and the words flowed in an unending stream.

"A hundred people have a hundred different characters, and the fingers of a hand are not of equal length. In looking after babies, you must know their temperament and humour them," she would say.

"Golden Orchid is a real lady. She's gentle, quiet, doesn't like to run about. You give her a string of dried beans and she'll play with it for hours. You give her a little drum and she's happy. Not so with Fiery Babe. He's like a little colt. He's off in the twinkling of an eye; he is not steady yet on his feet. He toddles. When he goes off, you must follow him

immediately or he may fall. And when you're walking behind him, you must walk slowly and call him gently. You can't chase him. If you do, he trips."

"At table," she would continue, "Golden Orchid sits properly, eating mouthful by mouthful. But not Fiery Babe. He eats a mouthful and runs away. But don't call him, or he'll play hide and seek with you. Just pretend not to notice. Don't look at him. He gulps down the rice and 'Suu—' here he comes."

Hsi Cheng-yang tells how she wheedled them into having their faces and hands washed, how she taught them not to wet their pants and not to eat soil. . . . "Looking after babies," she declares, "is a delicate job. There is lots to learn about it."

And whoever has looked after babies knows that it is more than a delicate job. It is a troublesome job, a temper-trying job! The co-op was expanded this year and in mid-April the baby-minding group was also enlarged. Some old women refused to help with this work. "I would rather carry a thousand catties on my back than carry a baby," one of them said. "I've had too much trouble looking after babies."

But Hsi Cheng-yang, now a veteran member of the co-op, spoke differently. "I never feel I've had too much looking after babies," she said. "On the contrary, the babies have improved my temper." And she proceeded to tell everyone present the reasons why they should help look after the babies.

"You pull a vine and the whole trellis shakes," she said. "Now that the co-op is on its feet, it's no longer a case of everybody for himself. If the crops thrive,

everybody gets more grain; if not, all are responsible."

"If the crops are to thrive," she continued, "everybody, man or woman, must do his or her job properly. If both men and women work, they can improve their living even with their bare hands. But if the man works and the woman remains idle, the harvest will be only half what it should be. If the women are to go to work, the babies must be cared for by the older women. If one refuses, and then another refuses, the bigger children will have to be called in to do the job—but it's time for the bigger children to pick up their satchels and go to school!"

"So there you are!" she concluded with a smile, "if I am asked to take charge of the babies, I'll do it with all my heart. But if I don't do the job properly, the mothers will feel anxious and the babies will suffer too. And if the babies aren't well cared for, the fathers will worry, and so will the mothers, and so shall I, and so will every co-op member. In the old days, it was a case of 'the crops blighted and the babies suffering!' Now we'll change it to 'the crops grow lush and the babies plump!' "

By the end of April, four grannies had reinforced the baby-minding group.

June 1954

THE KAOKAN AGRICULTURAL INSTRUCTION CENTRE

Tien Ching

The peasants of Kaokan Village, Shenyang, Northeast China are today unanimous in singing the praises of the Agricultural Instruction Centre set up by the government in 1952.

Peasants are frequently seen at the centre amicably discussing farming problems with the staff. The womenfolk often come to the centre carrying a hen or tugging a pig. Volubly, they beg the centre to do something about the hen which refuses to eat or the pig whose eyes look bloodshot.

What a contrast to their attitude towards the same centre two years ago! When government veterinarians first came to the village to give injections to the animals, the peasants were afraid it might harm their livestock—it never occurred to them that epidemics could be prevented in that way.

The centre started its work with a staff of four, of whom only one—the head of the centre—had much practical experience, the other three being young men fresh from agricultural schools. The peasants had little confidence in them, seeing them as mere students who knew nothing about anything except book-learning. Nor were they interested in those new-fangled

farm implements the centre had brought along, which, to their eyes, looked ridiculous and might not work, anyhow.

The staff of the centre, however, was not annoyed by the scepticism of the peasants, nor discouraged in their work. They knew that they had been sent to the countryside to give every possible help to the peasants to improve farming technique and increase output. That was the task the state had entrusted to them, and they were going to see it through.

The ploughs, drill-sowers, harrows, reapers—all the new animal-drawn farm implements brought to the village by the centre—were far better than the old ones. Their merits stood out a mile: the new ploughs ploughed deeper, the new sowers sowed more evenly and more closely. They saved labour and raised yields. So the centre sold these implements to the two newly established agricultural producers' co-operatives in the village on a seven-year credit, and saw to it that the members of the co-ops learned how to use them.

That was a good start. But much more remained to be done. The centre had to show the peasants that these implements really did a good job and produced results. So the peasants were persuaded to grow wheat. That was a crop where the new implements could shine. But the peasants in the locality were in two minds about wheat-growing. Some of them had tried it once and had been bitterly disappointed. What with pests and diseases, the crop had been an utter failure. Even when the centre told the peasants that the climate and soil thereabouts were ideal for

wheat-growing and that diseases could be prevented, nobody budged an inch. In the end the centre had to guarantee the wheat yield before the Kaokan Co-op would agree to set aside six and a half acres of its land for such an experiment.

The new farm implements would need four horses, and even then they'd take a whole day to plough an acre. Members of the co-op thought it a waste of animals. But the technicians replied that the new method turned up deep furrows and would save a lot of trouble in the long run. And so it turned out. As a matter of fact, the drill-sower later finished the six and a half acres in a single day. The co-op members were, however, still worried: weren't the rows too close? Would the seed grow properly? One old peasant Chiao, whom everybody considered an authority, declared oracularly: "It'll never grow, it's sowed too close!"

But the wheat did grow all the same. Despite the people's misgivings, the ears set. But then, pests appeared. Old man Chiao grumbled to everybody he came across, and other co-op members feared that the crop was done for. Even the chairman of the co-op was nonplussed, and appealed to the centre for help. Ho Chung-fang, the head of the centre, soothed him. "Don't worry," he said, "the pests won't last long." The wheat field was sprayed with insecticides, and by the next day it was clean. At harvest the yield was 84 quarters to the acre, some 32 quarters to the acre heavier than the maize crop. Old Chiao, convinced and impressed, went to the head of the centre and

muttered: "Looks as if I've got to buck my ideas up!"

It was an object-lesson to the peasants. They now began to have confidence in the centre. In 1952 both the Kaokan and Hsinglung Agricultural Producers' Co-operatives used the new farm implements. Wherever they were used, yields went up.

Next to the Kaokan Co-op farm was the land of Han Hua-nan, an individual tiller. With his own eyes he saw that the co-op, using new farm implements, got 190 quarters of maize to the acre while he with his old-fashioned implements couldn't reach even half that much. He decided to replace his old tools with new ones. But they were more than he could afford. Having weighed the pros and cons, he decided to join the Kaokan Agricultural Producers' Co-operative.

* * *

One summer evening in 1953, Kaokan Village witnessed something still more sensational: two tractors, a threshing-machine and a cultivator appeared at the centre.

The Kaokan Village peasants had seen tractors on Soviet farms in films, and had longed to have such machines for themselves. Now their dream had come true, and they were hilariously excited. The old folks never tired of looking at and running their hands over the shining tractors; they were all praise and wonderment. The youngsters jumped on to the machines, pretending to be tractor-drivers.

The head of the centre told the peasants that the centre was ready to plough any land with these ma-

chines, and that the service charge was very low, with payment either in cash or in kind. He showed how tractors would cost only half as much as to use animals, while output would be doubled. The cheers of the peasants showed how grateful they were to the government for making these things possible.

With the help of such machinery and the use of new farm implements, the agricultural producers' co-operatives of Kaokan raised their output still higher in 1953. The best yield was 191 quarters of grain to the acre. The average output of various crops was just over 101 quarters to the acre—a 51 per cent increase on the previous year. The value of each work-day went up to the equivalent of 48 lbs. of rice instead of the previous 32 lbs.

* * *

Every household in Kaokan Village keeps poultry and livestock, and pig-breeding is extremely popular, particularly since the centre introduced a fine new breed. Every household keeps four to six pigs, and it is reckoned that raising eight pigs is as profitable as cultivating a 10-acre crop of grain. The co-operatives also raise a large number of pigs on their own account. In 1953 the Kaokan Agricultural Producers' Co-operative alone sold 120 pigs to the townsfolk and made a very handsome income.

The use of the new farm machinery and tools by the co-ops meant a tremendous saving of labour power, and the centre was able to give guidance in applying the surplus labour to various profitable side-

lines. At the south end of the village a vineyard appeared. It now has 160 choice vines, supplied to the village through the centre by the Dairen-Lushun Experimental Farm. Trees were planted along the roads and in the courtyards of the peasants' homes. The chairman of the Kaokan Agricultural Producers' Co-operative told me they were to build well-designed, white-washed fowlhouses. They were going to start off the poultry-farm with five hundred leghorns—the strain recommended by the centre—and hoped as the farm grew to raise the number to a thousand or two thousand birds and perhaps more. Bee-keeping was to be another co-op sideline. In the near future there will be honey for their own consumption and for the market. The co-ops were also going in for dairy-farming. They proposed to have their own cows served by pedigree bulls provided through the centre, and it was expected that by the third generation they would have a well-established strain of good milkers.

* * *

New specialists in various fields are being trained from among the peasants by the centre. This is a job it has always paid great attention to. They told me: "As far as the socialist transformation of agriculture is concerned, it is necessary to train a great many people who are really at home in agriculture. We are not content with merely helping the peasants raise output. We intend to see that they have science and mechanical skill at their command. We have to create the conditions in which, in the near future, the

collectivization and mechanization of agriculture is possible." In the past two years, thanks to the efforts of the Kaokan Agricultural Instruction Centre, 250 persons in and around the village have learned a new style of farming, and more than 70 are thoroughly familiar with up-to-date methods of crop-growing. Men equipped with new scientific knowledge, specialists in market-gardening, fruit-gardening, pig- and poultry-breeding are coming to the fore in the countryside. Those who have distinguished themselves in their work have been invited to join the staff of the centre—to mention but a few, Chiao Yu-lin, now a technician, and tractor-drivers Chiao Sung-lin, Liu Chang-hai and Lin Shu-pe. Today the centre has a staff of nearly a dozen.

* * *

To mark the second anniversary of the founding of the Kaokan Agricultural Instruction Centre this spring, the government sent another three tractors to the centre. This brings the aggregate capacity of the machines, both old and new, to 150 h.p. This means that all the main work of the co-ops of Kaokan Village can be done by machinery.

The peasants of Kaokan Village now have a good understanding of what the socialist transformation of agriculture means. They know it will bring them happiness and a life of plenty.

In March, the Kaokan and Hsinglung Co-ops merged into a collective farm, and two mutual-aid teams and four individual peasants hastened to apply

to join it. This is what the individual peasants said on being accepted: "For two years we've been watching. We've seen the advantages of collective labour. Now, of our own free choice, we've decided to take this road."

September 1954

THE STATE FARM SHOWS THE WAY

Chang Jung-an

The mention of state farm usually brings to mind tractors puffing as they plough up one rich field after another, in summer, a sea of golden wheat stretching as far as the eye can see, or emerald-green crops in the autumn.

The state farm of Wenteng County[1] in Shantung Province, however, is not at all like that. The hilly terrain in which the state farm is located on the east coast of the Shantung Peninsula, a terrain criss-crossed by rivers and streams, has no space for large tracts of land. All that the state farm possesses is ninety-two and a half *mou*, and they are scattered pieces of land. Equipment is hardly up to the minimum requirements of modern farming. The farm owns five draught animals, only one new, animal-drawn plough and a microscope with a magnification of 1:700.

Till very recently, the staff of the farm had to live in the county's abandoned temple of the harvest god. Most of them did not have much scientific knowledge about agriculture, nor did they have experience in running a farm. With the exception of

[1]Wenteng County was liberated rather early during the War of Resistance to Japanese Aggression (1937-1945).

Manager Chang Hua-nung, who has been with the farm since 1943, the majority of people working on the state farm were transferred there from various administrative jobs in the government.

Despite all these drawbacks, the farm managed to get satisfactory results. It showed through high yields that its methods of management and cultivation were superior to anything the area had ever seen, so that it easily became a centre of attraction for the peasants. One can often hear remarks like "Weeds even didn't thrive where those people at the state farm can grow good crops! They really are doing us village folk great good."

Why do the peasants give such high praise to the state farm? The answer is to be found by a comparison of its production records in the past few years with those of peasants in the neighbourhood. Last year the state farm averaged 570 catties of maize per *mou*. The highest yield the peasants got was 480 catties. Dry rice on the state farm averaged 473 catties per *mou*. The peasants' average was 287. From its turnip fields the farm obtained an average of 8,350 catties per *mou*, while the peasants got a mere 1,900 catties. In groundnuts the farm harvested an average of 236 catties per *mou*, the peasants only 155. And all this the farm achieved on particularly poor soil, most of which is clayey and often stony hard when ploughed up. "These people," the peasants say, "are good enough farmers to turn even the poorest land into high-yield farms." Because of its good crops the peasants learn willingly from the state farm. A peasant in the county, who had to go on business

to Weihai city in the spring, told his father before leaving to go to the state farm as often as possible to see what they were doing and plant the maize exactly the way they did. When, in the autumn, the farm advanced the sowing time for its wheat, the peasants all around followed suit.

The results the farm has achieved in popularizing better farming methods are indeed remarkable. Kao-tsunchen is one of the larger towns in Wenteng County. With good communications it is a busy place where peasants from miles around come every market day to sell their produce and buy what they need. On these occasions they also visit the state farm to see how the farm's crops are getting along and what new methods might have been developed. They also want to talk with the manager of the farm, to discuss their own crops with him and to get an answer to all sorts of questions.

When I was at the farm, I often listened in on some of these discussions. It was an evening in autumn when I was talking to the manager of the state farm in his office that an old peasant from a nearby village came in. The old man explained his visit and then proceeded to tell the farm manager that he hadn't yet begun his wheat sowing. Last year he had sown four *mou* of his land to wheat but planned to make it five this year. Did the state farm manager think it was a good idea for him to do so? The old man sat back to wait for the answer.

But first the farm manager asked him a question: "How much fertilizer have you got?"

"This year I'm not going to put in beancake as fertilizer," the old man said. "I was thinking of putting in 40 cartloads of green manure, then add perhaps next year a little more ammonium sulphate than usual."

The farm manager did not answer right away but was shaking his head. This made the old man go on to explain, "I've heard about Tien Shu-ying, the army-man's wife, who brought in an average of 508 catties of wheat by using only animal and green manure. Not to use beancake for fertilizer is something I've picked up from others, you see?" And again he sat back, watching the manager's face intently.

Chang Hua-nung took another while before he answered: "You'll have a bad crop if you sow more land to wheat this year. I don't think you've enough manpower or fertilizer to do that."

"Just look at him!" the old man said turning to me. "Our Comrade Manager here makes it his habit to pour cold water on others! But never mind—the more he does it, the more I come to see him!"

The farm manager was still busy with his thoughts: "I'm afraid your wheat will ripen late and will have a lot of empty ears next year because you've changed the crop on most of the land you want to sow to wheat this year. The fertilizer you want to use doesn't have enough phosphorus in it. Therefore, the stalks won't be sturdy and will want to lodge. The best thing for you to do is to add 15 to 20 catties of superphosphate per *mou*. I know what Tien Shu-ying did for her crop—besides animal and green manure, she put in an extra 160 catties of beancake and 45 catties of

chemical fertilizer." And the manager opened his notebook and showed the old man the figures as he had taken them down.

The visitor put on his glasses to look through the notes carefully. Then he nodded his head as he said, "H'm! This does make a difference, doesn't it?"

His question answered, the old man was in a hurry to get back home—to look after his sick wife, he explained.

But the old man was hardly out of the room when Manager Chang rushed after him to remind him, with a tap on the shoulder: "Don't put in too much superphosphate, though! If you do, the plants won't take it! We put over forty catties on every *mou* of our wheat fields last year, but the extra harvest was only 5 catties on each *mou*. That's too expensive!"

"I know, I know—I've heard about it!" And the old man was off, without turning round.

The next evening, when I wanted to see the farm manager again, I was greeted by his assistant who told me that Manager Chang had been afraid that the old man might muddle up something, so he had gone over to the nearby village to make sure the old man did his wheat sowing the proper way. I discovered that the manager of the state farm visited peasants in the neighbourhood nearly every evening, to give them practical advice on the spot.

In every conversation I had with the peasants of Wenteng County about the state farm, the year 1946 was always mentioned. In the summer of that year, a piece of land near the highway belonging to the farm had been sown to a variety of wheat with flat

ears. The crop was coming up very well. The ears were big, the grains on them close together, and the stalks short and sturdy, despite the heavy ears. All the peasants who came to look at this field were full of surprise and admiration. They lovingly caressed the ears, rubbed off a grain or two and counted how many there were on the stalk—from sixty to a hundred grains on one ear! The "Red Baldy" variety grown by the peasants bore only half or one-third that amount. . . .

That year, the farm's wheat fields exceeded those of the peasants by 108 catties to each *mou* in yield.

Why is this fact still the subject of animated conversations so many years after? The reason is very simple: Wheat is the main crop in Wenteng County. Yields before 1936 were extremely low, with an average of 60-odd catties per *mou*. In those days, 120 catties would have caused a sensation. So, there was very little left of the harvest after the peasants had paid their rent to the landlord and the taxes levied by the reactionary government of those days. In that self-same year 1946 the state farm distributed its crop of flat-ear wheat as seed to 22 model peasants in the county. The next year, all of them brought in record harvests from their wheat fields, with over sixty catties higher yields per *mou* than the average peasant got. The peasants thereupon wasted no time, but quickly sought out these model peasants to get seed from them. Since then, this strain of wheat has been grown by 95 per cent of all peasant households on 90 per cent of all the wheat fields in Wenteng County.

The county's wheat crop has been going up steadily every year since the state farm introduced the selected seed of the flat-ear variety. This achievement must be credited to the people's organized efforts to increase agricultural production. It is also due to the help given by the state farm in the fight to eliminate wheat smut, in advice about better farming methods and the rational application of fertilizer. With bigger harvests, the peasants' living standards have gone up. An old peasant divided his life into three distinct periods: The first one before the anti-Japanese war, a period in which he never had enough to eat, let alone to wear; a period in which, during a famine, the people would trudge 10 *li* to peel the bark of the trees for food. The second was the anti-Japanese war period in which there was enough to eat and wear because the area had been liberated and, if crops failed, loans in cash and grain were issued by the Anti-Japanese Democratic Government led by the Communist Party. The third period was that after Chiang Kai-shek's rout. The land was distributed among the tillers, its rightful owners who have heeded Chairman Mao's call and have organized themselves for greater agricultural output. Better farming methods have been popularized by the state farm, and every year has been marked by greater abundance.

The peasants of Wenteng will always be indebted to the state farm for its efforts over the years in wiping out wheat smut, which had been the scourge

of the county, often affecting the whole crop. They still recall what dire straits this plant disease could get them into, the terrible loss and distress it caused like a plague. One peasant saw half of his wheat fields affected by smut. The crop he brought in that summer could not even pay for his costs. Since there was not enough food to go round, all the members of his family were quarrelling with each other, old and young alike. His wife cursed him. Things got so bad that he himself began to believe he was born under an unlucky star and wanted to flee to Northeast China, just to get away from the accursed place.

But the people remembered a man in the grey old uniform worn by government workers who went around with a microscope, explaining to them the cycle of the wheat smut and how to combat it. That man was Chang Hua-nung. His time and energy were spent in finding ways to fight this plant disease, searching through books, asking the old peasants about their experience in wheat cultivation. Finally he found the solution through an ordinary peasant who told him what had happened many years ago.

This peasant had sown part of his land to wheat in 1936. When the young shoots were coming up, those around the edges of the field were eaten up by grasshoppers. When he tried to replant what the pests had destroyed, he ran short of manure, so he did without it. When his wheat was ripening, not a single ear of the replanted area was affected by smut, but the rest was in a very bad way. This became

big news in the whole village at the time, because it was clear that the smut was caused by the manure used as fertilizer. Formerly, the peasants' practice had been to mix the seed with a certain proportion of manure before sowing. After the discovery, the peasants put in the manure first, then did the sowing. From then on, the wheat fields of that village were free of smut.

But since it was the time of the corrupt Kuomintang regime, this important discovery was confined to the peasants who had made it. While wheat smut was wiped out in one village, it still remained a scourge in the other villages. But once Chang Hua-nung had learned of these facts, he demonstrated on the wheat fields of the state farm how the seed was to be sown free from manure. There was no end of visitors when the peasants learned that the state farm had found a means of combating smut. The state farm sent its men out to explain this valuable method to the villages around. There were, however, sceptics among the peasants who thought that smut was a visitation on the unlucky. In such cases, the state farm guaranteed the sceptics' crops on the land where they applied this method. Also, all the model peasants and mutual-aid teams in the county were persuaded to use this method as pace-makers. Only then were all the peasants won over gradually.

Manager Chang Hua-nung was full of confidence talking about the prospects of the state farm which he led. "Our place is hilly, so probably we won't be able to use tractors on it. But we can plant trees

and we'll show the peasants how they can turn this big, hilly area into splendid orchards." And in fact, when I was leaving, the farm was already preparing the best varieties of fruit-tree seedlings for this purpose.

December 1953

A COMMON EFFORT BEATS NATURE

Hsiao Lan

Lungshou, an upland village in Kwangtung Province, suffered from natural calamities all last year. First there was a drought, then a local flood. Strong gales and insect pests destroyed most of what was left of the 1954 crop, and from September last year to April 1955 no rain fell at all. To top everything, during this long drought a sudden frost in mid-January killed the new crop.

With no water, replanting the early crop seemed out of the question. Many peasants thought there was nothing more to be done except ask the state for relief. Even some of the local government people and Communist Party members were at their wits' end.

It was Li Tsui-hua, one of the local Communists whose spirits had fallen, who spoke first at the emergency meeting which the recently established Party branch at Lungshou called after the frost. "The villagers are asking for relief," he said, "and I don't see any way out either. How can you plant when the fields are dry as a desert?"

But another Communist, Ko Shu-tai, chairman of the local agricultural producers' co-op, did not agree. "Of course, we can count on government relief," he

said. "It's right here, ready to be distributed. But the question we are discussing is how best to act in the interests of the masses. Is going on relief the real solution? I don't think so. In my opinion, we must find some way of carrying on production, whatever the natural conditions."

"I'm of the same view," said Ko Chen-yu, the Party branch secretary. "What the people need is to be able to raise a crop. We, as Communists, have the duty of taking the lead. Our watchword should be 'keep up production' so as to get through the crisis."

The meeting took a decision to this effect. All those present pledged themselves not to bow to difficulties, to think of the daily life of the peasants, and to take their place in the front ranks of the fight against the disaster.

THERE MUST BE A WAY

Afterwards, the Party secretary walked through the fields, almost wincing with pain as he saw the ravaged crop. He racked his brains. "We must find a way," he thought, "but how? What are we going to plant next?" In this fix, he thought of the constant injunction of the Party—to seek the advice of the masses in solving all problems. "That's what I must do at once," he told himself. "The old-timers here certainly know more than I do." And, forgetting his supper, he went off to see the old peasant Ko Chun-jui.

"Look here, Grandad," he said after greetings had been exchanged. "You know what things are like after the frost. Is there a way out?"

"Way out? Yes, we can lie down and die."

"The Communist Party will see that we don't starve," the Party secretary said seriously. "But the point is to get production going to save ourselves. You've had a lot of experience, Grandad Ko. Try to remember what crops there's still time to plant in this soil, besides upland rice and millet."

His sincerity impressed the old man, who thought awhile and answered: "Well, rape-seed and soya-beans might do it. But first we must have water. The ground is hard as a rock now."

That was indeed the question, and it looked insoluble. The village was surrounded by hills. There were no ponds or reservoirs, and the only stream had dried up. Going home for a hasty meal, the Party secretary called another meeting of the committee members of the agricultural producers' co-op. All the talk was about where water might be found, but it got nowhere.

Exhausted, the Party secretary plodded towards his cottage with slow steps. Suddenly, though it was almost midnight, he saw a light in one of the sheds and recalled that some mutual-aid team members were husking rice there. Instead of going to sleep, he went in and joined them in the work. As he pounded the grain, he talked first to one and then the other. Of course, the conversation soon got round to the frost.

"Honestly, I don't have the heart to go in the fields," said one peasant. "I simply can't stand the sight of the frozen shoots."

"We'll have to earn something by husking rice for the government," said another. "That's all I can think of."

The secretary waited till practically everyone had expressed his view. Then he looked around at the anxious faces, and spoke up loudly so all could hear.

"Comrades! Our Party branch has decided that we must get over the crisis by production. Grandad Ko, who has had more experience than any of us, says we can still get a harvest if we dig wells and start replanting early crops. We're in difficulties, true enough. But we have a chance of overcoming them if we all think hard and work hard together. The Party is asking the co-op and mutual-aid team members to take the lead."

"Well, we're all willing. Let's find the way and get going," several voices rang out at once, and there was spirit in them.

In the next twenty-four hours the Communists of Lungshou had mobilized the whole co-op and several of the better-organized mutual-aid teams. Ko Shu-tai, the co-op chairman, had a sudden attack of malaria, but he stayed on his feet. An idea burned in him, hotter than the fever. Come what might, he would find a place to dig for water before he returned home.

After several hours of vain search, he came to the slope of a hill. Suddenly he saw a patch of soil that looked dark and felt it with his hand. It was

soft and moist. "It hasn't rained for six months, but this water must come from somewhere," he exulted, and rushed off to see an old clansman of his, a man of over 70. From him he learned the reason. Half a century ago there had been a well near the hill which the villagers used for drinking water. Then a peasant fell into it and drowned, and the people, to avoid accidents in the future, had filled it up. "We used to call that place 'the Dragon's Pulse,' " the old man told him, "because there's water underneath. If you're going to dig, that's the place to try."

Ko Shu-tai no longer thought of his illness at all. He went at once to tell the Party secretary of his find. Soon more than thirty co-op members had assembled to uncover the well. But when they had gone down fourteen feet there was still no water, and they began to get discouraged. Ko Shu-tai, digging harder than anyone, urged them on. "It's moist, can't you see, it must be down there somewhere," he repeated again and again. But even sixteen feet down, there was nothing. "We live in the mountains and to sink wells is vain," one man said, quoting an ancient local saying. "Yes, that's our ancestors' wisdom, so it must be the truth," another agreed, and the work stopped.

Ko Shu-tai, left alone, gritted his teeth. "It's not the way of Communists to give in," he said to himself. "If we fail in this, the whole village will lose confidence. We must go on." Collecting some other

Party members and active co-op members he returned to the spot and began again. Seeing that Ko Shu-tai was still at it despite his fever, other peasants gradually drifted together to help. At 18½ feet the man at the bottom yelled, "Water!"

Within a matter of minutes a big, jubilant crowd had collected, as though for treasure trove. "Here's our first well," Ko Shu-tai cried out at the top of his voice. "See what your old sayings are worth." He held up his dripping hand, and his eyes sparkled.

As Ko Shu-tai had anticipated, more water was found once there was confidence that it could be done.

NEW CONFIDENCE AND HARVEST

After several mutual-aid teams had sunk wells, the Party branch called a meeting once more to sum up the experience gained. The conclusion was that there was water in many places in Lungshou though it took careful locating and deep digging to bring it to light. Since this had been demonstrated beyond doubt, the peasants were mobilized to dig further wells and begin planting new crops as soon as possible. Throughout the district, members of the agricultural producers' co-op and 62 mutual-aid teams worked night and day, digging for water, carrying it to the fields, ploughing and sowing.

A middle peasant who had withdrawn from the mutual-aid team was worried about how he was going to replant his acre and more of land. He thought, "If I were still in the team, there'd be no

difficulty at all. Now I can't manage it by myself. But I'll be damned if I lose face and apply for membership again."

This attitude was common among the individual peasants scattered in the 500 households in the district. But it had to be overcome if the co-op movement was to go ahead. The need to organize to fight the aftermath of frost was obvious, and the Party seized on this to encourage the unorganized peasants to change their minds. Following the Party maxim to give care and guidance to each individual peasant, the Party branch selected eleven experienced men to help the peasants organize. They helped one group of 25 families set up two mutual-aid teams, which soon afterwards dug three wells and planted new crops. Within a few days, 32 additional seasonal mutual-aid teams had been organized and old teams enlarged—bringing the number of co-op and team members up to 80 per cent of all peasants in the district.

Soon they succeeded in planting 510 acres under early crops in spite of the drought, three times as much as Lungshou did in ordinary years. Thanks to the extra effort put in by the peasants in manuring, weeding and irrigating, the crops came up handsomely even under the threat of drought. In March they got a rich harvest of early vegetables. The plump pumpkins weighed between 33 and 66 pounds. They raised 20 per cent more soya-beans than the year before. Now they are reaping the different kinds of millet they sowed. The upland rice is turning gold

and the heavy ears sway gently in the summer breeze. Thus the peasants won the battle against the worst frost and drought in a hundred years. Step by step they are learning that there is no strength greater than that which comes of common effort.

August 1955

ALONG THE OLD YELLOW RIVER BED

Chen Yung-chin

In olden times, the Yellow River used to change its course at will. Through what is now generally referred to as the old Yellow River bed—approximately from Kaifeng in the west to Hsuchow in the east—the turbulent waters poured themselves into the sea hundreds of miles south of the present estuary. As the Yellow River roared on this southerly course, many a village and hamlet was swept away by the flood or buried under the silt. Yifeng is a town that was thus obliterated from history. When the river changed its course, it left a vast area of some 1,600,000 *mou* covered with sand.

For many years, people hesitated to travel here where even a wheel-barrow could not get through. The wild geese on their way south did not stop, and smaller birds could not find a single tree on which to perch for a rest. In spring and autumn, sand-storms dimmed the rays of the sun so that it was necessary to light lamps indoors even during the day. People used to say: "Everyone who lives near the Yellow River swallows a few pounds of sand in a year's time." The seed sown by the hungry peasants no sooner sprouted than sand-storms killed the tender young shoots. Tenaciously, the peasants would bat-

tle against the oppressive sand by putting more seed in the soil, only to see their hopes destroyed once again. They often sowed three or four times, but without any success. Even if miraculously the seedlings did come up and grow into a small harvest, forty per cent of it would be snatched away by ruthless Kuomintang officials.

An honest, simple peasant of Tsaikang Village by the name of Hou Pu-an told me how he was plagued by the yellow sand. In spring and autumn, storms raged every day. In a few years the sand piled up against the back of his house as high as the roof, so that the family had to move their house further away. But the storms kept after them, piling up more sand, so that before long they had to move once again. One time, Hou's brother was injured when the house collapsed under the weight of the sand. Hou's wife used to stay most of the year with her parents in another village, only at sowing time did she come back to help her husband cultivate their six *mou* on the sandy land. If luck was with them, they might sometimes reap a few dozen catties of grain. But in most cases they reaped less than what they had sown. Hou therefore expected very little from his land. He depended mainly on collecting manure with his cart behind which he travelled round day and night. The manure thus collected he exchanged for a few carrots from the landlord. Once when he was out with his cart again, he was caught in a sand-storm that kept him from home for two whole days. And all this time his wife sat there alone, with nothing whatever to eat.

After liberation, the people's government showed the people how to plant trees. Only then did things begin to change along the old Yellow River bed. After just two or three years, the trees gave shelter like a protective fence and reduced the fury of the storms to quite an extent. Walking along this shelter belt, you could hear the wind whistling through the tree tops, but the dust and sand no longer blew about in thick whirls. The willows, poplars, planes and other trees that formed the forest belt were already over ten feet high; the trunks of some of them were thicker than tea-cups. Because of these trees, the people were able to get higher yields from their land; because of these trees, wheat and other crops could now grow where formerly even grass didn't come up. Hou Pu-an told me that the year before he had reaped 600 catties of wheat, 600 catties of coarse grain and several hundred catties of peanuts. In his small village alone they were able to reclaim three hundred *mou* and sow it to wheat. On a hillside in another village, five hundred *mou* of sandy land which had lain idle were turned into wheat fields. The people had also planted a very valuable kind of reed which, in three years' growth, could be woven into beautiful boxes and baskets. One catty of this reed, I was told, was worth 2 to 3 catties of wheat.

People would have never imagined that this area along the old Yellow River bed could change so quickly. In the villages I visited, practically every household showed its new prosperity by the amount of straw stacked and the pile of peanuts. They also had oxen now, and pigs, chickens, ducks, geese. . . .

On their fields protected by the forest belt the people worked, happily humming strains from Honan opera. At times they paused and listened to the far-away rumble of trains on the Lunghai Railway. The sound evoked dreams of the future: It wouldn't be long now before the railway brought them tractors! By then, they wouldn't need these clumsy, heavy, farming tools they were using now any more, and yields from the land would become richer and richer.

II

It was in the winter of 1949 that several men in grey uniforms had come to Lanfeng County along the old Yellow River bed. They told the people that trees planted everywhere in the locality would check the wind and storm. Then it would be possible to improve the soil and increase yields. Some were stirred by what these men in grey said. But there were also some who simply laughed at them. What was the use of puny willow cuttings just two feet high? To wait until these little things grew high enough to shelter your fields against the sand, you'd starve first! Some worried that, once they'd planted trees, they'd have to stand guard beside them day and night. Otherwise, who'd be responsible if the trees were stolen? The old folks shook their heads: "In all our lives, we've never heard of planting trees in winter!" A young man from Tungchuang Village was the only one who expressed this opinion: "How can anyone steal the trees once they're planted? The government realizes what trouble we've had. They

want us to get relief by planting these trees—what's wrong with that?" Then others came round, too. "It won't do us any harm to plant trees as the government tells us. When the trees are grown, we can sweep up the dead leaves for fuel." So, slowly, the people in Tungchuang began to appreciate what these men in grey had said. About thirty people organized an afforestation committee and made Sze Hsueh-ping, the young man who had counselled them so wisely, a member.

It had been decided to start with the tree planting right after the Spring Festival. But that very day a howling sand-storm made it practically impossible to keep one's eyes open. Sze Hsueh-ping told some of the elderly villagers they'd better go home. Then he turned to the others: "Let's get on with the work! If we don't plant trees, the sand-storms'll never stop blowing hereabouts." In spite of the raging sand-storm, the young fellows set to work with a will. Relentlessly, they drove the willow cuttings into the yellow sand, one after another, and finished the job in a few days. Each of them received more than fifty catties of rice as his pay—an enormous amount to people in that poverty-stricken area.

Eagerly, the tree planters then waited for the willow cuttings to sprout. Every day they went to have a look at the sandy bank of the old river bed. One month passed and then another. At last, the cuttings had tiny leaves! By summer, each willow stood as tall as a man, the pretty green giving life and colour to the sandy stretch far into the distance.

Even in this first autumn, the people in the neighbourhood benefited—practically every family could sweep up a big pile of dead leaves which they used as fodder or fuel. It was a great thing to know that never again would they have to worry about fuel, even in this barren region.

In 1951, winter afforestation became a popular movement. News of the agrarian reform gave an impetus to the people to increase the yield of their land through afforestation. The comrades guiding the afforestation work told people that model workers would be elected from among them, picked on the basis of how quickly and how well they planted trees and cared for the saplings.

There was a snowfall when the movement began. With the earth frozen, it was difficult to get the willow cuttings into the ground. Under Sze Hsueh-ping's direction, the Tungchuang people started before daybreak. Sze himself stuck to his job in spite of blisters on his palms and his hands bleeding. That night, when the people got together to appraise the work done in the different villages, the comrades from the Forestry Administration said there was little need for further discussion—Tungchuang had won the red banner by a long stretch.

On the second day, the ground was frozen even harder. None of the other villages tried to do any tree-planting, but Sze urged his team on. One of the peasants warned him: "Don't try to be smart, Sze Hsueh-ping! The other villages aren't going to do any planting today, so why should we show off?" But Sze waved him aside. "These willow cuttings will

never sprout once they are frozen," he said. "If we first make holes in the ground with a rake, we'll manage to get them in one by one. It's cold at home too with nothing to do, a spot of work will warm us up." So, the Tungchuang villagers carried on their efforts at taming nature despite the swirling snow. They even didn't go home for lunch, but ate some cold food in the snow and continued with their work. When the Forestry Administration learned of the method the Tungchuang people had used of making holes in the frozen ground with a rake, this method was immediately passed on to the other villages. Tree-planting was resumed and thus, with the people of Tungchuang in the lead, the villages along the old Yellow River bed completed the work of winter afforestation in four days.

I travelled some forty miles of the shelter belt in eastern Honan along the banks of the old river bed and saw with what care the people protected the trees, how they tended each one as if it were part of their own crops. I didn't see anyone damaging a tree in the slightest, let alone cutting one down. I only saw people cutting the weeds and undergrowth around the trees and sweeping away dead leaves. These were forest protection teams on duty. And if there still was anyone foolhardy enough to try and damage a tree, any child or adult would have dragged him off to the district government at once; he would feel so ashamed that he would criticize himself at a public meeting and give his solemn word never to do such a thing again. To the people in these parts protect-

ing the trees had become second nature and a sacred duty.

III

Other equally unheard-of things happened. On the sandy land some seven miles northeast of Lanfeng County, the Forestry Administration started a big orchard, with apple and pear-trees of different kinds and a variety of grapes. The orchard was so big it took me a long time to walk through it. The vines had borne rich clusters already the year before, and now the apple-trees were beginning to bear fruit. The orchard was the hope of the Forestry Administration and the peasants round these parts. In three or five years, it would have enough work for all the villagers in the neighbourhood. They would also be able to weave baskets for transporting the fruit to other parts of the country. A staff member of the Forestry Administration told me they were also planning to build a winery to give people in all corners of China a taste of their grapes. The people cherished another dream still: To plant 50,000 of the 190,000 *mou* within the shelter belt with fruit-trees. Nor is this a dream that will remain unfulfilled—the land along the old Yellow River bed is very well suited for fruit-trees.

The staff of the Forestry Administration had a deep personal attachment to the trees planted on the sandy river bank. A college graduate who had come

to the area barely two years ago told me that, if he could, he would like to stay there for the rest of his life. It was not difficult to understand Chang Hsiu-yueh's devotion to his work. Guiding the people and working with them, he had supervised the planting of nearly 10,000 apple-trees. The young saplings weren't any thicker than his little finger when they'd been planted two years ago, now they were as thick as his thumb and putting out branches. Chang adored his trees and tended them with paternal devotion. Two years ago, the provincial Forestry Bureau had sent him to help the people plant 9,500 apple-trees in winter. The ground was frozen to a depth of nearly four inches, and it was decided to change the soil in order to help the trees grow. They removed the top layer of frozen soil, dug up the poor soil underneath and put in good, rich soil. They had to dig up about one cubic foot of earth for every small sapling no thicker than a chopstick. In the sleet and the wind, the people were covered with a thin layer of ice from head to foot. But no one felt the cold. Chang Hsiu-yueh usually stayed up till late at night; by daybreak he was out again in the orchard inspecting the apple-trees. The last of the 9,500 were planted on the eve of 1953 and Chang told me it was the best New Year's Eve he'd ever had.

When spring came, the apple-trees sprouted dainty, green leaves. Chang inspected every single tree with great care, walking the length and breadth of the orchard to look after his nurselings. In the end, only two of the saplings died because somebody had

stepped on them. Chang was happy in his work. For Chang and his co-workers the greatest joy was to change this sandy area into orchard and arable land. To get more crops for the country was enough of a reward.

January 1954

WATER

Chen Yung-chin

During a visit to the area around the Yi and Meng Mountains in Shantung Province, I went to see the water and soil conservation station there. I also looked in at the Taipingkuan Reservoir and the Sino-Soviet Friendship Agricultural Producers' Co-operative in Chuanli Village, not far from this reservoir, where some remarkable yields had been achieved.

The reservoir was half-way up the mountain east of Chuanli Village and close to Taipingkuan Village after which it is named. Its water irrigates fields in three villages—Taipingkuan, Chuanli and Sungfeng.

The chairman of the Sino-Soviet Friendship Co-op Liu Lien-sheng walked with me up to the reservoir along one of the irrigation ditches. On the shady side of the fields the snow still hadn't melted. Liu stopped by some cypress-trees and pointed at the wheat fields thick with seedlings like a horse's mane on both sides of the ditch: "These are the wheat fields of our co-op. We had a record harvest last year—more than six hundred catties per *mou*. The wheat stood so high that only my head could be seen and, after all, I'm not very short. The ears were big and long, they made the stalks look like dogs'

tails. All the members of the co-op came rushing to see this wheat before it was cut.

"In the past, everybody was longing for a big harvest. But how could we achieve a big harvest on these hill slopes? The land was barren, there was no water. . . ."

Nine years out of ten there would be a drought in these mountains where there is only a thin layer of earth. In summer, a few dry days will make the soil parch through and through.

"From 1948 to 1950," Liu Lien-sheng said, "we fought the drought every year, but we suffered from it just the same. Most of the peasants here pulled through simply by relying on government relief grain. Things were better in 1951; it rained several times and people had a breathing space. But in 1952 there was a big drought again. One third of the wheat died, with each *mou* of land yielding only a few dozen catties. In 1953, another drought struck this area. The whole summer we wore ourselves out, carrying water to the bean, sweet potato and groundnut fields.

"Years ago, people used to go up to the Taishan Temple kowtowing to the deity and burning incense in supplication for water. Countless times they thus paid tribute, but their prayers fell on deaf ears. Hunger and poverty dogged the people in these mountains, so that many ran away to Northeast China, hoping to find life easier there.

"But do you know—it wasn't really that we had no water on this yellow earth," Liu suddenly pointed to a small stream below the reservoir on which ice

was floating. "This stream was here all the time, but we couldn't make use of it formerly. . . ."

We stood beside the stream and looked at the clear water that wound its way between the stones. For years it had rubbed the stones round and smooth, while the sun parched the crops on the hills from generation to generation, draining the people's strength and driving them away. Only after the founding of the People's Government was the water made to irrigate the fields and turned the mountain slopes into land capable of producing rich crops.

We continued along the gully of the stream. Soon we caught sight of the sluice-gates of the reservoir up on the hill. The water at the outflow was frozen. When we got up to the reservoir, we found its surface frozen too. Liu Lien-sheng halted and asked me with great pride in his voice what I thought of the structure.

I admitted it was a great thing, but I was interested in something else: Were there any fish?

"Why, there're lots of them and big ones, too!" Liu got quite excited. "If you come here again in two years, we'll catch a huge carp to treat you!" He gestured with his hands how big it would be. "There are some fish each weighing three or four catties now. The fry we put in last year weighed only around ten ounces each. They have grown all that in one year! People hereabouts hardly ever tasted fish in the past—they had to get them from nearly two hundred *li* away. But last summer a man came from the county some thirty *li* away to see our reservoir. He told us he had a pond that contained

sixty or seventy cubic metres of water in which he reared fish; in less than three years, he'd got six hundred catties of fish from it. Our reservoir here holds two hundred thousand cubic metres of water. That means we can raise twenty to thirty thousand catties of fish in a couple of years. That'll give us a nice extra income! Who would have ever thought that fish could come up the mountain!"

I then asked Liu why the reservoir built was in this particular spot. "That's a long story," he said, "but don't worry—I'll tell you all about it."

In the autumn of 1952, a group of surveyors had come up here. They dug holes in the ground, measured the mountain from top to foot and set up their theodolites all over the hills. . . . Later, they called a mass meeting at which they proposed that a reservoir be built in order to increase production, with the dry land transformed into irrigated fields. Party members and village cadres soon realized the value of this proposal, but the people took some time to convince. When Liu, one of the village cadres, heard about the idea, his mind was set afire. He remembered he'd heard at a meeting in the county that people in one village had crops of twelve hundred catties of the "Golden Queen" strain of maize a *mou* and five or six hundred catties in others through irrigation. How envious he was of them! But here, without water for irrigation, they couldn't put enough manure on the fields, and how could they have a good harvest without enough manure? So he and many others were keen to get started on a reservoir.

Chuanli Village is not far from the Shuho River which used to flood the land around every year. So, while the peasants in Chuanli Village in Shantung Province were up against drought, people along the Shuho River in neighbouring northern Kiangsu had to fight floods. A reservoir would end droughts in the area around the Yi and Meng Mountains, while the lower reaches of the Shuho River would not be threatened with floods any more. What could be better!

In March 1953, just after the ploughing, construction began on the reservoir. Liu was on the construction site from dawn to dusk every day, giving a lead to the peasants. Since the stones they could find on the mountain were not suitable, they had to get better ones three or four miles away. They would set out in the dark and come back with cartloads before daybreak.

The reservoir and irrigation ditches leading from it were completed during the year. People came from far and near to see, from other counties in the province and even from counties in neighbouring Kiangsu. The talk was that similar reservoirs would be built in other places too, quite obviously under the influence of the reservoir at Taipingkuan.

In the winter of 1953, the Sino-Soviet Friendship Agricultural Producers' Co-operative was founded and Liu Lien-sheng was elected chairman. Since then, he has concentrated on how to increase production.

In the spring of 1954, when the peasants who worked by themselves had not even started ploughing yet, the co-op decided to try out new methods on two

mou of wheat land, to set the village an example. On that bit of land, they put twenty-four catties of chemical fertilizer, in addition to over six hundred basketfuls of manure. Because the seed had been sown closely, the seedlings came up in dense rows. The village elders thought it was sheer nonsense to sow so close together. Perhaps the seedlings would grow stalks, but certainly they wouldn't grow ears. Even some co-op members didn't think this the right way. They wondered, with top soil so thin in this mountain area, where the seedlings would put their roots. But Liu's faith was not shaken. All that he had been taught and what he had seen with his own eyes confirmed the view that close-planting was the road to success. It just couldn't be wrong.

A drought set in just as the wheat was coming into ear. The crops on the experimental two *mou* of land were quite seriously affected—the plants looked shrivelled. At this juncture, the sluice-gates of the reservoir were opened for the first time and water filled the irrigation ditches. Everybody, young and old, was happy to see the fields being irrigated. Some washed their faces with the precious water, others dipped their hands in to feel it. Before long, the wheat plants all straightened up again. One of the peasants who still worked his land individually beside the co-op land, warned that the water was too cold and therefore no good for the crops, and that he'd rather let his fields go dry than irrigate them with such cold water. But when he later saw how flourishing the wheat stood on the co-op's fields, he came to the chairman, asking that his fields be watered too.

On this experimental plot, the wheat stalks were bending under the big and heavy ears. Crowds of people came every day to look at the rich crops. The co-op members were pleased, while those peasants who worked on their own watched from the outside with great envy. Some calculations were for three hundred catties of wheat per *mou*, others even counted on four hundred. But they were all wrong—the harvest brought six hundred and forty-eight catties per *mou*. Even the ordinary fields of the co-op that were irrigated yielded between three and four hundred catties.

After seeing this bumper harvest on the Sino-Soviet Friendship Co-op, all those who had no water for their fields were sorry to see their much smaller harvest. The co-op's yield was double or triple their own. Even those peasants who had "gone it alone" so far realized that, with the reservoir and the sluicegates, watering the land was an easy matter. So most of them applied to join the co-op, and so the co-op kept expanding. Only five of the one hundred-odd households in Chuanli Village remained outside. But by now they too were asking for admission.

March 1955

ROVING FARMS SETTLE DOWN

Chi Hsi-chen

The area inhabited by the Miao people in Kweichow Province includes many, many miles of mountainous country. In spring, when these densely wooded heights are shrouded in clouds and mist, young people used to come in small groups, armed with knives and axes, and begin to fell trees. When they had felled a fair number, they would set them afire. Fanned by the wind, the forest fire would spread over hills and mountains, consuming everything in its path, and die down only when there was nothing left to burn or when a sudden downpour extinguished it. Then the forest land which was carpeted with a layer of ashes would be sown. Lacking draught animals and farm implements, all the Miao people could do was to till the land in this manner —burning down the trees on it, then throwing the seed on to the soil. The land was not ploughed or harrowed. Nor was any fertilizer applied. After sowing, all they could do was, simply, to wait for whatever harvest there would be. This method of cultivation easily worked the land to death, so that it would have to be abandoned after one or two years. Another part of the wooded hillsides would be selected and the same process of burning and destruction of

the land would start all over again. Season after season, year after year, this process went on from one part of the mountainous country to another, with the result that more and more of the virgin forest was cut down and the land abandoned soon after, because the soil had been exhausted. Farming was seldom done in the same place twice.

But in the spring of 1951, the People's Government of Leishan County in Kweichow Province issued a call to the Miao people to change their farming methods and to cultivate definite pieces of land. A poor peasant named Li Shih-chang living in the village of Sanchiaotien thought this a good idea, but he did not see how it could be done. A peasant all his life like his forefathers before him, neither he nor any of the other Miao people had ever tilled the same piece of land on those mountain slopes for any length of time. Now, after the government's call, Li turned his thoughts to this matter. Yes, the comrade from the work team which the People's Government had sent to the area was right in what he was saying about harvesting only a few handfuls from a hilly slope. And there was always the danger of fire, or flooding of the low-lying areas through soil erosion.... But what other method of cultivation was there? Where could he get farm tools in this mountain fastness? What could he do with his bare hands? The worst thing was that the time for sowing was drawing near, and the few people in his family between them didn't own as much as a hoe! He had to tell himself regretfully: "This is something that's been handed down for generations and cannot be changed

overnight! Tomorrow I'll have to start burning off the trees just as before."

So, early next morning, Li took his axe and went up the mountainside. When he had found himself a nice thicket he started clearing it, singing while he worked. The stillness of the forest was broken only by the sound of his axe and his singing. Suddenly he heard someone calling, "Who's that cutting timber?" and saw Comrade Li Hao from the work team coming up. Li quickly put down his axe and asked instead of replying: "How come you're up here on the mountain, too?"

"I've just been to the county town," Li Hao told him. "From now on, you won't need to run all over the place and cut down the forest. Chairman Mao has sent a great many metal tools to help you Miao people with better methods of farming!" And he slapped Li Shih-chang excitedly on the back. "I got the letter yesterday, so I rushed to the county town last night. Come and see for yourself—I've got the farm tools right here!"

"Ha! Now we'll be able to grow real crops!" the peasant said in happy excitement and followed Li Hao out of the thicket. There were so many brand-new, shiny metal ploughs, ploughshares and hoes being taken over the mountain trail by a dozen or so carriers on shoulder-poles that Li Shih-chang was left speechless in his amazement. His heart pounding, he touched now this one, then the other of the new tools being carried by. He would have liked to try them out right then and there on the soil under his feet....

The courtyard of the village government office where they were taken was crowded with people who had come to see the farm tools. There were old men with black turbans on their heads, women in purple skirts of a hundred pleats, and young girls. They felt like coming to a celebration and joy was written on every face. Those who could not push into the courtyard stood outside, talking and craning their necks for a glimpse.

Li Shih-chang jostled his way in and out among the crowd, now coming out into the street, now going back into the courtyard again. He had to speak to as many people as possible to share the joy he felt himself.

"Have you ever seen anything like it?" he asked of no one in particular. "As long as I can remember, this is the first time that so many tools have come all in one lot!" And to an old woman who was wiping her eyes with her sleeve, wondering how the Communist Party and Chairman Mao could show concern for even such matters, he said: "He always thinks of our troubles." Then he proceeded to count off on his fingers in a loud voice all the benefits the Miao people had received, as if afraid the others might not hear him: "When our stocks of food ran out, it was the Communist Party and Chairman Mao that sent us relief grain. When we didn't have enough to wear in winter, again the Communist Party and Chairman Mao sent us warm clothing. This time, they send us farm tools. That's more than a son can expect from his own parents!"

"Well, are you now going to cut down any more of the forest?" one of the villagers asked Li Shih-chang point-blank. Li Shih-chang came right back at him: "Who'd stick to such methods once he gets hold of implements!"

II

When the warm, radiant smiles of dawn stirred the good earth to life again, people went out to till the soil. Li who started working while it was still dark had already ploughed a big piece of land still covered with slush and some snow after the spring thaw. The wonder of the silky black, upturned soil impressed all the villagers as they came by. "Look, Shih-chang is giving his land a home!" they said. Li Shih-chang who has bushy brows, big eyes and is of medium build, is only twenty-four years old. He is honest, sharp-witted, and quick to grasp anything new. A good-natured smile lights up his sunburnt face. People have shown the confidence they have in him by electing him commander of the detachment of village militia, as well as leader of an agricultural mutual-aid team. When the metal farm implements had been distributed, he was the first to change over to the new method of cultivation—tilling a definite piece of land. He not only ploughed the wasteland. He also dug up the tree stumps, banked up his fields, built stone embankments around them, dug ditches and made a fence of tree branches. His fields looked neat and well-cared for. When people asked him where he had learnt all that, he said smilingly that,

a few days earlier, he had been to the fair in the county town. On his way, he had seen some peasants of Han nationality cultivating their hilly land on the banks of the Tankiang River the way he was doing now. When he had remarked how troublesome a method this was, they had replied: "If we don't do it this way, how can we bring in a good crop?" Li Shih-chang had to admit they were right—the way the Miao people had worked before, simply scattering the seed on untilled fields, brought joy to the sparrows only. "It was our own stomachs, though, that remained empty!" he concluded.

Digging his hand into the soft soil he said, "Look, it's fully six inches deep, not only good for sowing, but also deep enough for transplanting rice seedlings!" And, scooping up a handful of earth, he crushed it in his palm and threw it into the wind. "The finer the clods are broken, the better the crops will grow," he said.

There were villagers who at first did not believe in ploughing on the slopes. When they saw Li Shih-chang doing it, they became convinced, although a few still shook their heads. "It's a good way—but how much work it means! We can't do all that...."

But nowadays the work team does not need to go from door to door and teach the people how to do it. Many have learnt the new method of cultivation simply by observing what others were doing.

One morning Li Hao of the work team headed for the mountains, picking his way through the ravines and underbrush. He found that all those who not so long ago used to rove with knives and axes, setting

one part of the mountains after another on fire, were now cultivating a definite piece of land. What used to be nothing but scrub now was being made into reclaimed fields. The forests, hitherto noted for their stillness, were full of the shouts of peasants trying to make their oxen go faster with the plough, and of the sound of stones being piled up for embankments around the terraced fields.

"The life around here is changing fast!" Li Hao said to himself, chuckling in memory of his own initial unwillingness at being transferred, in 1950, from the army to work in this national minority area. Why did they have to send Han people to work here? But after more than a year, he understood not only how important the work being done in the national minority areas was. He had also come to like the people better. To see how they were going forward day by day towards a new life under Communist Party and government leadership gave him a sense of joy and pride. And, he thought, this is only a beginning. How much more prosperous and beautiful will life be here in future when these people will work collectively and agriculture is mechanized!

Thinking about these things, he had walked past field after ploughed field. But when he bent down to examine the soil, he found that no fertilizer had been put on any of them, though ploughed they were thoroughly.

That night Li Hao called a meeting of village cadres and the most active among the peasants. But when he brought up the subject of fertilizer, his

listeners surprised him with their loud laughter, as if he had just told them a joke.

"Putting fertilizer on hilly land? Never heard of it."

"Crops grow just as well without fertilizer!"

"Putting fertilizer on hilly land is like lighting a lamp for a blind man. Other villages will laugh at us!" And so they went on.

Li Hao spent quite some time to explain the importance of applying fertilizer. He proved to them that their own local practice of applying manure increased the yield of rice, and said he hoped those present would set the pace for the whole village by using fertilizer on their fields. At this point, Li Shih-chang suddenly remembered that once he had gathered three additional *tou*[1] of maize from a piece of land because it was strewn with the ashes of weeds and trees he had burned. Wasn't that the result of fertilizer? he asked himself. He stood up and excitedly related this fact to his fellow villagers, ending with the words: "Tomorrow, I'll put manure on my fields on the slope.... During Kuomintang days, we never had enough to eat. So why should we have bothered about putting fertilizer on our plots? But now we've been given a new lease of life—we must do the same to our land!"

It took some more persuasion and explanation before the villagers at last began to put manure on their fields. There were men and women working for themselves individually as well as members of mutual-

[1]A dry measure with a capacity of 316 cubic inches.

aid teams. Even the cadres from the work team took part in this work. Manure was carried up to the fields by every means available, including carriers with shoulder-poles. After manure was put on the fields, some three hundred *mou* were sown not only to millet and maize but also to tobacco. When the sowing was over, some of the older people were still sceptical about manuring. But as time went by, there was a big difference between the fields on which fertilizer had been put and those without. The fields with fertilizer looked a shade greener, the seedlings were bigger and denser in foliage, while the plants on the fields without looked puny and frost-bitten.

"Anyone can see the difference now," Li Shih-chang said to the work team comrade. The two of them were squatting by a field green with young shoots that were swaying with every breath of wind. And he continued: "We Miao people don't believe anything until we have touched it with our own hands and seen it with our own eyes, no matter how good it is! But you just wait and see now—by next year, no time will be wasted in getting fertilizer on to the fields, nobody will have to be persuaded!"

While Li Shih-chang was still talking, Li Hao had pulled some weeds out of the ground—there was quite a lot of them all over the fields. Li Hao thought it was time to get the villagers to loosen the soil and do some weeding; so he said: "Lao Li, look at these weeds—if you want good crops, manuring alone isn't enough. You've got to weed too!"

But Li Shih-chang replied: "Weeding? That's a job several times harder than manuring even!"

"Naturally," Li Hao retorted, "it's no small job. But we have to do it, and I'm sure it can be done if we cadres know what we're doing, in the first place."

His experience on the past two occasions had convinced Li Hao how important it was to be able to rely on the cadres from among the national minority people themselves. So he added: "As in the past, we'll begin with the cadres first, let them provide an example for the masses to follow!"

"You're right," Li Shih-chang answered, drinking in every word Li Hao said. But he was absorbed in his own thoughts and so he said, with a faint smile: "You think we can do it, but I'm still a bit doubtful."

"Things are different now," Li Hao said. "The masses are convinced that improved methods of farming will benefit them."

Li Shih-chang was looking at some fleecy clouds at the far end of the horizon, his thoughts in turmoil: "How can we do it? Here in these mountains of ours, nobody has ever heard of weeding! If we don't do it right, we'll ruin the crops too, and a whole year's hard work will have gone for nothing!"

But when he thought that every reform the Communist Party had recommended had been for the good of his people, he slapped his knees hard with his fists and stood up abruptly:

"Let's start weeding," he said.

III

By the beginning of June, every one of the fifty-one hard-working households of the Miao nationality

in Sanchiaotien Village had weeded their hillslope fields and rice paddies twice. There had also been some rain recently, so the crops were growing beautifully. The broad, thick tobacco leaves and the rice plants with their heavy ears brought hopes of a rich harvest. At this thought, everybody was ready to burst into song:

On loess hillsides golden flowers grew —
How could we reap with nothing but bare hands?
The wooden tools of many years aside we threw,
Exchanged them for new metal ploughs and blades.
There, in the city of Peking, lives Chairman Mao —
The greatest benefactor of us Miao!

When the autumn harvest began, the ripe rice looked like huge, orange-coloured tapestries of satin on the terraced fields. The millet, tobacco and maize stood tall like thick blocks swaying gently in the breeze. Clusters of peasants with shiny sickles swarmed over the hills which looked as if clothed in a golden mantle.

"Good crops," Li Shih-chang said with a happy smile to another member of his mutual-aid team. "The effort we put into weeding and putting on fertilizer didn't go for nothing, eh?"

Which drew the quick retort: "I said right at the beginning that was what we had to do!"

"Hey, look what I've got—three big ears on one stalk!" The man who had made the lucky find was

jumping up and down in excitement, holding up a large stalk of maize. "In former years the maize here had ears the size of a sparrow. Now they're as big as turnips! It's the same land and the same weather. Yet what a difference!"

The harvesting of rice and tobacco also went ahead in a big way. Some people were cutting the crops, others stacking them or carrying them to the threshing floor. Repairs were also being made on the sheds where the tobacco leaves were to be dried. All the people—men and women, young and old—threw themselves happily into the autumn harvest. The sound coming from the threshing floor that was piled high with the harvested grain could be heard everywhere. The village showed an average increase of 13 per cent in grain crops for the year. In some cases, the increase was as high as 35 per cent. Wherever Li Hao of the work team went, people surrounded him to tell him all about their rich harvest.

"This harvest is almost too good to be true!" Li Shih-chang said. "My two and a half *mou* of what was wasteland not long ago brought in four hundred catties of tobacco leaves and two hundred catties of maize!"

Grinning all over his face, he was counting on his fingers for emphasis. "Not only that," he said, "the rice-fields gave me 32 loads[1] of unhusked grain. If I compare my tobacco crop to rice, it means I got

[1] A load is the weight a grown-up person can carry suspended from the ends of a shoulder-pole. It may vary from 60 to 150 catties, according to the carrier's strength.

three thousand catties of rice! And this means that this year I've harvested 25 loads of grain more than I ever did before liberation. This is the first time in all the generations that my family has had such a crop!"

IV

During the harvest festival celebrating the rich harvest brought in, every home had chicken or duck to feast on. People put on their best clothes, visited their relatives and friends, and enjoyed themselves to their hearts' content. On the threshing floor the older people were sitting round a wine jug, sipping and singing old songs about the history of the Miao people, a history marked by sufferings and privations. But they were singing also of the good life at present that the young people should treasure all the more because of the terrible past. On the grassy slopes, courting couples were sitting side by side. The young people went singing to villages in the neighbourhood to find other girls and young men. At nightfall, a gentle breeze brought to the people gathered in the village square the fragrance of flowers. When the bright moon rose over the mountain tops, dancing began to the accompaniment of cymbals, drums and the *hulu sheng*.[1] One song followed another till the mountains around them echoed

[1] *Hulu sheng* is a wind instrument of many pipe-like reeds tied together that gives off soft, moaning sounds.

with the melodies. This was what they were singing about:

In old days past, the harvest was a cause for many a tear;
A happy harvest festival is something new this year.
The mountains of the Miao now bask in light —
A thousand flowers blossom everywhere so bright!

Li Shih-chang was in his element singing. Sometimes his voice rose to an angry shout—as when he recounted to his listeners, who were shedding quiet tears at the memory, how the Kuomintang used to seize young men from among the Miao people for conscripts, how these lawless brigands insulted and violated their young women, how nine out of ten Miao people had to cover their nakedness with palm fronds instead of clothes, and how they had had to eat grass roots to stave off the worst hunger. But when he sang about Chairman Mao Tse-tung, the Communist Party and the new life of the Miao people, his voice soared happily till he drew forth a storm of applause from the crowd.

Li Shih-chang knew well what he was singing about. Now he is rid of all the poverty for good, now he owns a horse, an ox and various farm tools. In the past, he too was almost naked, with only a coir-palm cape to wear for going out. Now he sports a new, cotton-padded suit of navy blue, with a fountain pen stuck in his breast pocket. At night he

carries a flashlight. There are many others like him in the village. At every festival the Miao people now celebrate with wine and songs their happy life in the great family of nationalities that constitute China.

May 1954

THE NEWLYWEDS

Hai Mo

I arrived a day late for the wedding of the production team leader of the collective farm with the girl who was the driver of the harvester combine. But I was able to get a very lively description of what had happened at the wedding party from the young shock workers on the farm who were only too eager to tell me all about it. "We had hung up a big apple by some strands of red wool," a young girl with bobbed hair said. "We told them to bite into the apple together. But do you know what happened? The bride wasn't at all the usual shy type. Instead, she turned right round on us and teased all the other girls!"

Another lass cut in. "That bride's quite a tough customer, let me tell you!" The speaker was just a slip of a girl, but her voice rang out like a little drum. "She called all of us by name and asked about our sweethearts: 'Wu Yu-chen, when will you and your boy friend eat the apple together?' Wu Yu-chen became so embarrassed that she slipped out of the room. 'Tattle-tale Chen, isn't it time you tell people what your future's name is?' That fixed one big mouth—after that, the girl Chen didn't say a word all evening! 'Chang Yu-yung, you better be careful

or I'll tell your future mother-in-law what I think is wrong with you.' Chang Yu-yung hid in the crowd after that. . . ."

"Pooh, you girls were no use!" A young man spoke up in a deep, throaty voice. "When we men saw what was happening, we quickly put our heads together to decide what should be our method of attack. After some discussion, we thought we should ask the bride and groom to . . . erh . . . uh . . . kiss before us all. We told them we wouldn't let them off otherwise."

"And did they do as ordered?" I asked. By the looks of this young fellow I could see he was the type to get what he wanted.

"It didn't come to anything worth talking about," he replied. "The bride certainly knew how to handle things. She went up to the groom, put an arm around his neck and asked into the crowd: 'Wu Yu-chen, last time when you and your boy were behind the haystack, did you do it like this?' And at that she gave our team leader a loud smack on one cheek. So, in the end, she still had the last word. And poor Wu Yu-chen, who had just crept back into the room, fled again...."

I was sorry I'd missed all the fun at the wedding. To make up, I decided to visit the couple and offer them belated congratulations. Leaving the main office of the collective farm, I crossed the huge threshing floor in the direction of a thatched two-room house, whose door and windows were freshly painted blue. It was the usual kind of house in these parts, and

only the red paper-cuts on the window panes marked it out as the home of the newlyweds.

All was quiet and peaceful. The cold December weather of Heilungkiang Province kept people indoors. Anyway, the farm had finished its job of carting manure to the fields, and the collective farmers were making use of the slack season to discuss plans for the coming year.

With a perfunctory knock, I pushed the blue door open and entered. Someone was mumbling in the other room over a square root of some figure or other, so I walked in quietly in order not to disturb him.

The winter sunshine that flooded the room added colour to the new quilts, to the pretty picture-frame on the wall, and to the black-and-gold lacquer box in which a bride keeps her toilet set. One glance told you that this was the home of newlyweds.

I watched the young team leader from behind as he pored over an arithmetic problem. He was sitting on a carpenter's bench in front of the *kang*, leaning his back against a stack of quilts, with one leg over the bench, the other pulled up on the *kang*. He looked so uncomfortable in this queer position that it was obvious he was not used to studying; probably he had wriggled and twisted himself into this posture in agony over the task in hand. . . .

Crouching there in a maroon sweater, with leather shoes of enormous size on his feet, he noted my presence only when I banged against the door. He jumped up nimbly, seizing my hands with his ink-smeared ones, leaving a few fingerprints on mine in

the process, when I said, "I've come to congratulate you and your bride."

"Ho, ho, come in and sit down, Comrade!" The team leader had a big, square face, but he was not at all bad-looking. His eyebrows which seemed knit together gave his face a sad expression, though, even when he was smiling. But when he began talking, he was a completely different person, convincing you by his voice and expression that he was an honest and straightforward chap.

"You're doing well for yourself, eh? Marrying a combine driver, no less!" I slapped him on his broad back and pulled him down beside me on the *kang*. "Don't remind me, please! I've had enough trouble with this combine as it is!" His eyebrows were knitting again. . . . His answer was so unexpected that I wasn't sure whether he really meant the machine or its driver. However, judging by his frank countenance, I gathered that he didn't have anything against the new times with their new things. At any rate, I was glad he had turned our conversation that way. It saved me the trouble of gradually leading up to the subject. We had already got to him and the combine driver.

"I'm sure you know that we formed three co-operatives here in 1953." The young chap evidently thought I knew all there was to know about the collective farm. "Some time later, our co-op went a step further and became a collective farm. When a machine-and-tractor station was set up in this neighbourhood, our collective farm and the two co-operatives put their land together into bigger lots, so the

sowing and ploughing could be done by tractors. Then it was decided to sow this continuous stretch of land to wheat. For the sowing, we had calculated how much seed each of the co-ops should contribute according to the size of its fields. The tractor did a wonderful job—it finished the work in less than two days! The wheat grew splendidly, from a distance the fields looked like smooth, green velvet. But when harvesting time was near, our people started worrying —there was so much wheat to reap. We could not start until all the wheat was ripe, but by then a heavy downpour might ruin the whole harvest before we could get it in. So we thought it over and decided there was only one thing to do: to ask the tractor station to send us a combine. At first the station manager wouldn't agree. 'You're too impatient to get into new shoes with bare feet—you'll stub your toes, if you don't watch out! Make your old shoes do for a while longer,' he advised us. But we insisted: 'You have to come and help us out! If you people hadn't come, we wouldn't have dared put so much land under wheat.' "

When the team leader paused here for a moment, I saw an opportunity for asking him how he'd come to know the combine driver.

"I'm coming to that," he said and then explained they had been classmates in a four-year primary school course. He pointed to a picture-frame on the wall.

It held a number of small photographs, neatly lined up one beside the other. The whole looked like a page out of a pictorial. My attention being directed

to the pictures, it saved me the trouble of asking too many questions. I noticed that the pictures were arranged in chronological order and that the first two were probably taken when they had finished the course together. The couple seemed to follow the fashion of writing something like a motto beside their photographs. The picture of the bride, then a young girl with plaits, bore the inscription "Strive for the mechanization of agriculture!" while the young man was more vague with his "Work for a bright future and truth!"

I had some idea of the situation now. She probably was one of those who always know exactly what they want to do, while he was not yet decided in his own mind. "I suppose your wife went off to learn how to drive a tractor as soon as she finished school?" I asked.

"Yes, she was very lucky. The Party Committee of our county wanted only one person from our village for such training, and they wanted a woman. There was no vacancy for men."

"You haven't said a word yet about your personal relationship with her."

He blushed. It was strange to see this husky young man look as bashful as a young maiden. Stroking his own burning cheeks, he remained silent for several minutes before he composed himself again. Then he put on a very serious look which, I supposed, was meant to keep me from asking any more embarrassing questions. "There isn't really much to tell," he said. "Young people have their ideals. We just seemed to get along well and feel the same way about

things. . . . Then she went away to the tractor training school, and the thought of her was always spurring me on to make good in farming, so I wouldn't be laughed at. You don't know my wife, Comrade—she's that proud. If she thinks somebody isn't good enough, she can skin him alive with her tongue."

"I see! So you became a model farmer because you were afraid of what she would say to you. . . ."

Struck speechless again, he gave me a sidelong glance and decided to ignore my remark. "I figured it this way. I'm young. . . . I've had a bit of schooling, I have my pride, too! The more people look down on me, the more I want to do something really worthwhile to show them. . . ."

His honest, matter-of-fact attitude made me feel I shouldn't have joked like this, when he was so serious and straightforward about it all. To hide my embarrassment, I looked over two other photographs in the frame. Here was the girl driving a tractor, while he was hoeing the field, his arms and shoulders bare. . . . The contrast was really comical and I felt a bit uncomfortable for his sake. The tractor was leaving him way behind — there they were, the girl working with up-to-date means of production, while the man still used old-fashioned implements. But the young man went on with his story unperturbed. "Yes, she finished her training and started work on a state farm. Then she was sent here only to help us. Now I'm coming to the point where I left off just a while ago — when we were arguing with the manager of the tractor station. We finally got ready to welcome the combine. We built an archway across the road

to our village and covered it with coloured bunting, and children lined the road as if they were a wall. At first, we only heard the rumble of the combine in the distance. You know the little hill just before you get to our village — so, when the combine finally appeared on the hill, it loomed larger and larger, until it was as high as a two-story house. When it came near, we discovered her on it as the driver. Funny coincidence, eh? I was both glad and disturbed, all at the same time. Here she was, having gone ahead quite a bit, but where was I? . . ."

"You aren't doing so badly either," I said, "as the leader of a production team on a collective farm."

"Ah, that's just it — if it hadn't been for this team leader business, I needn't have felt so ashamed. As the team leader, it was my job to assign work to everybody, so I couldn't help coming into contact with her. You don't know the fix we were in then! Of course, a combine is a wonderful thing. But the land of one co-op consists of two or three big strips jutting into, or surrounded by, big strips of land belonging to the other co-op. Well, we decided to start on the land of the Red Star Co-op first. But the combine is not a small gadget that you can turn around in any space at all; what made it worse was that the first piece of land we tackled was on a slant. One move too many, and the combine was right on to the land of the other co-op, the Red Flag Co-op. Now we were in for it! How were we to divide the grain harvested? We had to stop the combine at once, measure the area over which we had harvested by mistake, make a rough calculation how much grain this area should yield,

and take it out of the bin, to be handed over to the Red Flag Co-op. And all this time the combine stood there puffing! And the driver certainly wasn't one to economize on words. There she sat on that combine yelling at us: 'Think of what all this nonsense is costing, think of all the petrol you're wasting!' To finish the three big lots of the Red Star Co-op, the combine had to make a big turn to get from one to the other, without a proper road to turn round on. If it went straight through, the crops would be damaged. If it harvested its way across, we would again have difficulty in dividing the grain between the two co-ops. Phew, it wasn't easy to finish the harvesting on the land belonging to one co-op! It took us a whole morning. Then, some more trouble: By the time we'd at last finished, the other co-op hadn't got their gunny sacks ready! Although the combine had been slowed up by the funny arrangement of our land and all that, it still went much faster than our farmhands had imagined. Everyone was fascinated by the big machine. They just stood there and stared and stared, and never thought of getting the sacks ready. Wherever the combine had finished, things were also in complete chaos. Our old ways of organizing field work were naturally out of date for mechanization. People were piling the straw into sheaves, but we hadn't thought of transportation for taking the sheaves to the village. The combine dropped the straw in neat little stacks and there they remained, like rows of little huts. We were all in a flap, because there was no way of transporting them. At long last, a cart arrived, but we needed it to put the grain on.

What really troubled me was that, after we'd finished with the fields of one co-op, we had to stop and thoroughly empty the bin before the combine could start again. In the end we barely worked over five hectares in a day. And I who was assigning the work was in the worst fix. I hurried this person and then that one, but somehow there was always someone missing. I dashed around, dripping with sweat and my legs getting more and more tired out, but still I couldn't get enough people for the job. 'I want to have a good look at this thing first,' they'd say. 'What's your hurry?' Come to think of it, the manager of the tractor station kept remarkably cool. Although he was worried stiff, too, he kept on telling us: 'Take it easy, this is only the first try-out . . . take it easy!' Now, the tongue of the combine driver couldn't keep idle for all this to-do. 'What are you trying to do — waste our country's wealth? . . . We'd better take the combine back to the station! If we'd known what you people are like, we wouldn't have come in the first place. You're the most backward lot I've ever seen. . . .' These words struck home and her tongue never stopped wagging, one stinging word after another, each one a sharper needle than the first. But, thank Heaven, we got a bit of face back when we came to harvesting on our collective farm. Our land had long been joined into one vast stretch, so that our 29 hectares didn't need any waste turnings of the combine. The combine started at seven in the morning on the collective farmland and before the lamps were lit that evening, it was back at its station. A good thing too, because as soon as the

harvest was in, the rain came down for five whole days on end. After this experience with the combine, there was no further need to convince the people of the advantages of collective farming. They themselves were clamouring for collective farms, so that all the land could be turned into one vast stretch."

"That combine really was powerful!" I couldn't help laughing at this story. "It made the peasants move straight towards collective farming."

"Seems like it," he said. "After that, the two co-ops joined our collective farm."

"And did the combine force you into marriage, too?"

Even the serious team leader couldn't help guffawing this time. He was about to tell me his personal story when we heard a gay, rippling laugh outside the window, then a bang of the door. With a wave of his hand, the team leader turned towards the *kang* to look again at his arithmetic problem. I was sitting on the edge of the *kang* near the door, so I was hidden from view when the bride came in.

"What, you're still staring into space? You're a big boy now, don't forget, but all you do is amuse yourself. Haven't you solved that problem yet? I'm telling you, if you don't make progress real quick, nobody's going to wait around for you. You talk of being glad about the new machines, but you don't learn how to handle them, and you don't farm in a way so that the land can be worked over by tractors. . . . Oh dear! I didn't know we had a visitor!"

High time, too, that she discovered me. I was just getting a little uneasy for our young team leader.

When she turned to me, I could get a good look at her. I was surprised — she was quite different from what I had expected, one with such a sharp tongue. She still had the pretty, roundish face of a little girl! Her straight, ink-black eyebrows nearly touched each other. She was slight of build and even in her bulky padded clothes one could see how well-shaped she was.

Now she was having a go at me. "Are you the reporter just arrived? I'll tell you something you can write about! Don't you think we ought to criticize the collective farm because it doesn't arrange its work according to the requirements of the tractor? You may take down whatever I say, but first mention must be of our great team leader here. . . ."

I saw that she was only just warming to the subject, so I thought it better to divert her for her husband's sake. "I haven't come about that at all," I said. "I heard that you were one of the first few couples in this village to marry by free choice. . . ." I myself wondered a little what sense I made, when the young woman had made progress with such arrow-like swiftness that one felt a bit breathless trying to keep up with her.

"So you think our marriage is one of free choice? I didn't think it was all that free!" Now she had me still more confused. But to give our team leader a hand, I decided on attack. "Oh yes, that's true. I've heard all about it, how you were the one who took the initiative. That's so, isn't it?" She was a young woman, after all, so she blushed.

As a matter of fact, the story of their romance had been told me by the farm chairman the night before

That morning, the young shock workers had only added colour to the story, so that my feeling for both of the young people was one of great admiration. He was so solid and reliable — the production team he led never failed to overfulfil its quota. She was spirited and responsible, even if proud and sharp-tongued. Their friends had added that he was the kind of dependable young fellow girls like — once he'd given his heart, he wouldn't look at any other skirt. Before they were married, they used to meet at Wu Yu-chen's, the home of the girl mentioned earlier in this story. Yu-chen had overheard some of their conversations. She said once or twice she had taken the team leader's side against the combine driver when he said, "How can a person like me be good enough for you? You yourself are always telling me what's wrong with me. . . ."

"Can't I put you to a test?" the girl had said.

"Ah, then you accept me the way I am without further criticism?" he had asked her then.

"I'll still want to criticize you, even if I'm willing to marry you! I want someone like you — someone honest and solid."

Though I knew all this, I still wanted the young couple themselves to tell me more. But my tactics were obviously very poor, for the young woman gave me no more information than what Yu-chen had heard, that is, although she criticized him, she still wanted him, an honest and solid fellow, to be her man.

"Then why do you bully and belittle him so?" I asked her point-blank.

"That's an awful way to put it, Comrade, don't you think?" With arms akimbo, she was looking me full in the face, her eyes wide open. "Haven't you heard what Chairman Mao said about the socialist upsurge in the countryside? Is it enough to be just honest and solid for building socialism? Why do you think I said that our marriage wasn't all that free? Well, I did have my eyes on him because he was honest and solid; but it was only much later that I realized honesty alone isn't enough, that one must be willing to learn more and more all the time. You don't know him — he simply can't bring himself to sit still long enough to do any studying. But what's the use? Now it's too late for regrets, anyway. . . ." With that, she gave her husband an affectionate look. "Why are you listening to all I'm saying? Hurry up and solve that problem! You asked me to teach you, now you don't study properly. . . . Hurry now, get done!"

"What a sharp tongue you have!" I simply had to come to the husband's rescue somehow. He wasn't all that backward as she tried to make him out to be. His production team was something of a legend in the area, quite a number of the people under him had put in over 300 work-days during the year. Then, why was he so cowed by this girl? I had no answer. "Must be the power of the combine!" I told myself.

Later, what one of the young shock workers on the collective farm said, some time after my visit to the newlyweds, helped me in understanding the young couple better. My informant had chanced to overhear the end of an argument between them. "Has there been an answer to my application for Party member-

ship?" the wife had asked in a small voice. It is necessary to explain here that the team leader was a member of the Communist Party and on the village Party Committee, while his combine-driver wife was only a Youth League member.

"What do you think the answer should be?" the team leader had asked her in turn. And on this occasion he had sounded much surer of himself and more authoritative than usual.

"Come now, don't be so cagey! Just go ahead and criticize me frankly for whatever faults I've got."

"It's the same old thing again: You're too impulsive in your work and you're too fond of showing off."

"Listen, it's not fair to pay me back for personal grudges! Didn't I do the right thing in making you study?"

"I don't mean that you are like that at home only. You haven't changed much in this respect ever since you went to the tractor school."

"All right, I'll change now and listen to you in future. How's that?"

"I want you to know," the young husband had said, "that I don't mind humouring you when there're people around. But I'd like to ask you: Did you pick up all your knowledge in one day?"

"You shouldn't pick on me for a little fault like that, you nuisance, you!"

I thought this episode very amusing. There was, after all, a force that could subdue even the sharpest-tongued combine driver!

December 1955

WHEN PRIVATE LAND OWNERSHIP DISAPPEARS

Yen Ling

Although the land of the Szema Collective Farm in Yungyang County, Honan Province, is now collectively owned, traces of its having been formerly divided into small plots still remain to pain one's memory.

Two rows of pear-trees, growing side by side, one tall and healthy; the other stunted and scraggy, are one example. People living there now tell about these pear-trees as though they were telling about the follies they committed in their childhood.

Not long ago, a land boundary ran right between the two rows. That on the west belonged to Hou Yung-hsin, while that on the east was owned by his younger brother, Hou Shih-tou. Yung-hsin, hoping to profit at his brother's expense, planted a row of pear-trees close to the boundary. When Shih-tou saw this he immediately planted another row as close to his side of the boundary as possible. He gave the land plenty of manure and his trees grew much faster than his brother's. In fact they overshadowed the others which remained stunted for years.

As a result the two brothers became enemies.

Now when people pass by they say, "Look what harm private land ownership brings to the people!"

There were many other quarrels originating from disputes over land.

The people in Szema Village remember a bitter fight between Hou Fu-hsiang and his two nephews, Hou Lu-ming and Hou Shu-ming, in which they struck each other with iron bars and ended with severe gashes on their heads. It all started with a dispute over a small piece of land. In those days, whenever a family came to divide its property, there would be quarrels and blows, for land was the basis of existence. There were also those who lost their land for debts and had to slave for years to redeem it. Hou Yu-lan worked for forty years as a cook before she was able to redeem the land her family had mortgaged.

In the land reform, which followed liberation, the landless and poor peasants took possession of the land on which they had toiled so long. But it remained divided into tiny plots. Prosperity could not come that way.

When it was suggested that a well be sunk no one was willing to put in so much work for his small piece of land. When there was a drought, those who had no water moved elsewhere.

East of Szema there were forty *mou* of low lying land which were flooded every year in the rainy season. Judging by the quality of the soil, these forty *mou* should have produced at least 10,000 catties of grain; but actually only 1,000 catties were harvested. The problem would have been solved if a ditch had

been dug to carry off the water. But because the forty *mou* were divided into small plots owned by many families, the ditch could not be dug as it would run across their plots and thus take away some of their land. Every year people watched helplessly while the water turned the "granary" into a big lake.

Who would not wish to be rid of such sufferings? And who would not strive for a better life?

After the land reform had been completed, the peasants of Szema Village, led by the Communist Party, went on to mutual aid and co-operation. In the autumn of 1952, an agricultural producers' co-operative, the New Road Co-op, was organized. While the cultivated area was the same, the output kept rising from year to year. In 1952, the average output per *mou* on the land belonging to the mutual-aid team was 188 catties. In the co-op, in 1953, it was 296 catties. In 1954, it was 336 catties, and in 1955, 373 catties—double that of 1952.

The annual income of the members was increasing.

In 1953, the amount paid for one work-day was 0.64 yuan; in 1954, it was 0.78 yuan; and in 1955, 0.95 yuan.

The proportion of income derived from land dividends was gradually becoming less. In 1953, it was 4 against 6 paid for labour; in 1954, it was 3 to 7 (a portion of the harvest from industrial crops which exceeded the average yield was distributed as payment for labour). In 1955, the proportion remained unchanged (that portion of the harvest from all crops

in excess of the average yield went as payment for labour).

Although income derived from the dividend for land became a smaller part of the whole every time distribution came round, members who owned more land still received an ever-larger income. When people saw two years in succession that their income was increasing, they willingly agreed to reduce the amount of the dividend they received for land.

They all said: "We've worked the land much more successfully these years than in the past."

"Land is passive but labour is active. If you work more, the land will yield more; therefore the more work-days you put in, the more money you get." This concept gradually took root in the minds of the co-op members.

When members divided their family property, nobody wanted land any longer. "You are only seeking trouble if you bother about land," they said. "You'd better put in more work-days!"

In the summer of 1954, when the New Road Co-op lowered the ratio of land dividends to payment for labour from 4 against 6, to 3 against 7, twenty-eight people (17 women and 11 men) in the 50 member-households who had previously taken little part in field work, now did so most frequently. "What are my total work-days?" gradually became the most common question asked by members.

In the spring of 1955, an agricultural machine station was set up in Szema Village.

The absurdity of private land ownership which resulted in so many unrelated little plots became even

more apparent with the appearance of tractors. To facilitate the operation of the machines, members were now willing to remove the boundary stones. But even with such advances, there was another obstacle: among its fields were many plots owned by peasants working on their own who were still outside the co-op. These were obstacles in the tractor's path. The land that could not be ploughed by the tractor took three days to work with eight animals. When this was brought to their attention the members felt uncomfortable. When a combine was sent to the Yungyang Station, it could not reach the co-op because the road was too narrow. Even if it had been possible to get it there how, with its harvesting capacity of one thousand *mou* of wheat a day, could it have been used?

When the autumn harvest came in, it showed that maize grown on tractor-ploughed land yielded 70 catties per *mou* more than that grown on land cultivated by hand. In the case of tobacco, the increase was over 50 catties.

The machines finally convinced the peasants that it was not to their good to cling to private land ownership.

Directives from the Party and government to eliminate within a few years ordinary floods and drought, as well as the main pests—rats, sparrows, mosquitoes and flies—and to raise output many times, further stimulated the masses. But people discovered, while drawing up production plans for their villages, that private land ownership still hampered the carrying out of a number of basic projects in agricul-

ture. Although the land had been put under the single management of the co-op, many members didn't like to have the ditch run across their land. Private land ownership also still restricted labour enthusiasm to a certain degree (some members who owned relatively more land thought that it didn't matter if they did not work full time, since with the proportion between the dividend for land and the remuneration for labour being fixed at 3 against 7, those who owned more land could still get a bigger share).

After the production plan was drawn up, people said, "It looks as if we're nearing socialism." But there were still stumbling blocks on the way.

The members decided to do away with land dividends, to get rid of private land ownership and to form a collective farm.

At first, a few of them, to be sure, had doubts and misgivings.

Widows and elderly women were afraid that, since they could not do heavy work, they would go hungry and cold. But they quickly found that the collective farm was on a much larger scale than the co-op and that work was even more carefully divided, so there was plenty of light work for them to do. The amount in the welfare fund in the collective farm was also expected to be larger, so they would be better cared for. Thus they were happy.

Those who owned more land were still inclined to cling to it. When the production plan was drawn up and they learned about the expected increase in output, they realized that with land dividends abolished, the labour enthusiasm of all the members would

increase; the land could be more conveniently put under a single management and output more quickly raised. Even if their income depended entirely on labour, it would still be larger than in the past.

"We pin our hopes on work-days!" "We have no objection to the elimination of the land dividend; the only thing we fear is that there won't be enough work to do!" The peasants of Szema Village were proud that these words were theirs.

People who had quarrelled over small plots grew to be on good terms. The members of the farm had only one thing in mind: to wrest more from the land by collective effort! Those who had formerly slacked now took part in production with a new spirit. The drainage ditch which the older people had dreamt about for scores of years was dug in around twelve hours (it entailed the removal of more than 60,000 cubic feet of earth).

While private ownership had turned brothers into enemies, collective ownership turned enemies into brothers.

While private ownership kept the productive forces in thraldom, collective ownership wholly liberated them.

January 1956

NOT WINTER, BUT SPRING

Tao Tun

All I could see from the car window were some withered leaves on the poplars that lined both sides of the highway. In the past, this would have been the time when the threshing ground was cleared of the last grain and when the peasants would squat idly on the heated *kang*. They would have waited till the earth had thawed after the Spring Festival before they would start ploughing. But now it was different. On the land beside the highway people were doing their winter ploughing with ten-inch and double-share ploughs here and irrigating wheat fields by means of water-wheels there. Unbaked bricks for building purposes were piled up to dry as high as a wall. All this activity could make the traveller think it was springtime, rather than winter.

Such was the new wind blowing along the Taian-Laiwu Highway in Shantung Province after Chairman Mao Tse-tung had made his report on "The Question of Agricultural Co-operation" and the Central Committee of the Chinese Communist Party had adopted the Decisions on Agricultural Co-operation. When the People's Congress of Shantung Province called for yield increases—in sweet potatoes as high as ten thousand catties per *mou*, in grain and groundnuts

a thousand catties each and cotton a hundred catties —the members of agricultural producers' co-operatives took energetic steps to change the slack winter season into another busy period.

Leaving the car, I headed straight for the village fifteen *li* from the city of Laiwu that I wanted to visit again. Before the liberation, I had known it as a poverty-stricken place. Now it had grown beyond recognition. As the co-op chairman of the village said, there used to be too many in each of the following seven categories: beggars, famine refugees, people in debt, hired farmhands, carriers, petty food vendors and bachelors. The co-op was set up in 1952 and after three years things had changed so much that now there were seven new categories of plenty: greater incomes, more draught animals, many houses with tile-roofs, many people with new clothes, many more children going to school, and many people sporting flashlights and rubber shoes, luxury items before in China's countryside, and many more people now able to get married.

When the co-op was first set up, the village was still short of grain and seven families had to depend on government relief. In 1953, the whole village joined the co-op, with the exception of the family of one man who was still under supervision for past deeds. The very same year, the co-op was able to increase its output and became the pace-setter in the county. People flocked from all parts to see its high-yielding wheat fields. In 1955, after 12,500 catties of grain had been sold to the state, every member received as his share an average of 450 catties of

grain (exclusive of sweet potatoes), 500 catties of vegetable, 30 catties of hemp and 11 catties of raw cotton. A grain-poor village had turned into one with surplus grain. Even three years ago, there had been only one house—a church it was—with a tile-roof in the village, while old, tumbledown straw huts sprawled here, there and everywhere. Now there were half a dozen houses with tile-roofs and every one of the old, dilapidated huts had been renovated.

On the second day after my arrival in the village, the five sons and only daughter of a villager were celebrating the 70th birthday of their father. As is the custom in rural areas, there was a separate table for men and women, and there were six dishes on each table—chicken and other meat, rice noodles—together with two bottles of wine. The old man looked fondly at his children, wine cup in hand. "Ten years ago, when I was sixty years old," he said, "this village was nothing but a few ramshackle huts, and we couldn't live in peace. We had to hide from the Japanese and the collaborators. If there hadn't been a Communist Party and Chairman Mao, there wouldn't be a today. So this cup is to Chairman Mao!" He nodded to the portrait on the wall before he drained his wine. This he followed with three further cups which loosened his tongue. "The year we joined the co-op," he reminisced, "my son Teh-ti experimented on a plot of land to get 400 catties of wheat. I had worked that plot for 30 years and I knew it. It was sandy soil for a whole foot down. How could he get 400 catties! But he did, with repeated watering and

hoeing he got no less than 415 catties. Wasn't that something? The co-op really knows the way."

During the meal, the daughters-in-law served the old man, offering him now steamed bread, now some dish. All he could do was to keep smiling in his happiness. . . .

But the other people in the village were not so satisfied with what had been achieved. In the spring of 1955, co-op members were pondering over the idea of making their co-op advance to the next higher stage—that of a collective farm. For three evenings running they discussed the matter till the demand that the co-op indeed be converted into a collective farm was unanimous. They submitted their request to the People's Government of the township which transferred it to the district. Then the request went to the county and from there to the special administrative office. There was no immediate reply. However, after Chairman Mao's report on "The Question of Agricultural Co-operation" several Party functionaries came to acquaint themselves with conditions and permission was granted. The news spread immediately throughout the village and put everybody in the highest of spirits. "I nearly pulled the house down over me in the excitement!" This was how one of the staff members in the agricultural instruction centre put it.

Discussions how to run the collective farm were so thorough that some of the villagers said: "It isn't enough to criticize conservative attitudes among the leaders. We must examine our own conservative thinking too!" While looking into the question of

water conservancy, someone remembered: "Last year we'd decided to improve things for the dry fields, but have we done that? There are still eight *mou* of land that haven't been irrigated on the southwest slope. That's conservative, isn't it, to decide to do things and then not to do them!"

When they were talking about raising pigs and collecting manure, one opinion was that, while at present the co-op had only some seventy pigs and the plan for 1956 was to increase this figure to 102, even this was computed on a household-to-household basis, so that it would only mean two pigs for each of the 51 households in the village. But hadn't the chairman of their co-op just got through telling them about what a certain village in Yangku County had achieved, that there each person had a pig, not one whole household just two? It was also found that there was some conservative thinking on the question of wheat production. Some people proved that there were quite some possibilities of getting more from the land, that it was far from being exhausted. Figures were cited in support — 415 catties of grain had been harvested per *mou* in 1952, and 550 catties in 1953 despite some wheat smut. Some recalled that, in 1953, they'd ploughed six to eight inches deep, and had done the same this year for wheat. But just look at the results of some other co-ops that had ploughed ten inches deep. . .!

Before they really turned their co-op into a collective farm, all the members drew up a comprehensive plan for agricultural production. On a sandy tract outside the village near the dyke along the river that

was overgrown with weeds, they'd planted a row of trees along the water's edge three years ago as a shelter-belt. They were planning to build another dyke beyond the original one, to make sure the river could be kept in check, and to plant the sandy tract to fruit-trees. Thus the village would be another hundred *mou* richer. Before the saplings grew up, however, they were going to cultivate groundnuts and sweet potatoes. They also cut the grass that had gone wild on ancestral graves. Fallen in till they were mere little mounds, these graves were now planted with apple-trees. "Let our forefathers also get a taste of socialist life!" the villagers said. "Let them enjoy the blossoms in spring and fruit in autumn!"

In the collective farm the lands of the whole village were joined together. Land belonging to peasants in other villages was rearranged. Over these vast tracts, high ground was being levelled and low land was being filled up. Small paths between the fields that were no more needed were ploughed up. Roads were widened so that rubber-tyred carts and motor vehicles could pass. Bends in the roads were straightened, so that crops could be transported in less time over the shorter distance. Co-op members were busy carrying earth for littering down the animals. They were also hauling unbaked bricks for new co-op offices and sheds for the co-op's animals to be put up in the spring. Carts moved along the road in an unending stream while the people worked like beavers, preparing in the winter for a rich harvest in the coming year.

December 1955

TRAIL-BLAZERS IN THE WILDERNESS

Fang Ching

Young land reclaimers who have volunteered to go from Peking to Lopei County in Heilungkiang Province, are greatly inspired by the many warm letters they received every day from young people throughout the country. Some questions such as "How have you settled down?" and "How are you reclaiming the land?" are repeated again and again. These questions need answering.

HOW THEY SETTLED DOWN

Lopei County is a beautiful place. It is bounded on the north and east by the Heilungkiang (Black Dragon River), by the Sungari River on the south, by the Chiayin River on the northwest and by the Wutung River on the southwest. About 300,000 hectares of virgin forest on the Lesser Hsingan Mountains in the northwestern section of the county form a natural barrier against the cold currents from Siberia. On the coldest day on record (in 1953) it was 37° C. below zero. The Tulu and Yatan Rivers cut across the county, emptying into the Heilungkiang and Sungari respectively. The land reclamation team settled down on a plain between these two rivers, in the centre of

the county. The area embracing over 20,000 hectares was shaped like a butterfly's wings. The members of the team were delighted with it from the start.

At the head of the "butterfly" was Unity Village. The team built their camp on a piece of high-lying ground three *li* west of the village. The peasants of Unity Village and Wantsai Village nearby helped them put up the necessary fifteen huts. The team itself also erected five buildings to be used as stables. This is how they settled down.

The team sank a well in their camp, the water of which proved to be very good. "We don't need to drink tea now that we have this water," the members of the team said.

Winter clothes had been prepared and distributed: sheepskin overcoats, rabbit-fur hats with ear flaps, black cotton-padded jackets, cotton-padded rubber shoes. The eleven girls in the team were of great assistance with the clothes. Despite the fact that they did as heavy work as everybody else, when they got home at night, they liked to help the boys wash their linen and darn their clothes. Teng Kwei-ying, who acted as cook and had more time at her disposal, gathered up all the clothes that needed washing, after the young people had gone to the fields, washed them and dried them on the *kang*.

Their food consisted of rice, millet and maize flour, and enough vegetables. Most of them put on weight, and looked healthy and full of energy.

Young people from many places throughout the country sent them 2,000 books as a gift with which they began their own library. They also had a *huchin*

(a two-stringed Chinese musical instrument), flutes and other musical instruments. In the evening after supper, singing could be heard from all corners of the camp. They started drama, music and acrobatic groups. They all rehearsed hard, getting ready to perform at a party to welcome new members.

HOW THEY DROVE BACK THE WILDERNESS

They had long been dreaming of reclaiming wasteland. On arrival, they hardly waited to untie their knapsacks before starting work.

On the outskirts of Peking, you can harness two mules to a plough and start ploughing. Not so in Lopei County. The land was virgin soil, thickly interwoven with tree and grass roots. The first thing the team did was to ask the local peasants for advice. Meanwhile, the Huachuan County Committee of the Youth League sent ten very experienced young agricultural technicians to help them open up the land with two-wheel double-share ploughs drawn by six horses (later they used eight horses). The Huachuan youth showed them how to adjust the shares so as to make them plough to the required depth and how to repair the adjusting rod. The members of the team had seldom used horses for ploughing before. At home they had oxen and mules, and they did not understand a horse's temperament. They were hard put to it to drive a six or eight horse team, especially as the local horses did not understand the words they used and would not respond to their commands. So the young people from Huachuan patiently drove the horses for

them, and explained how to handle them. Their difficulties were thus quickly overcome.

During the reclamation period, it rained almost daily. The earth was sticky; it was very heavy walking. It was about a *li* or so from the field to the camp (no houses had yet been built). At first the team members returned to camp when it began to rain, and went out as soon as the rain stopped. But it often happened that by the time they got to the field, it had started to rain again. Provided it did not pour buckets, they stuck to their work. Li Chen-hua who drove the horses said, "We young people are filled with fire. When the rain stops, the heat from our own bodies will dry our clothes."

The introduction of the two-wheel double-share plough went by no means smoothly. At first, the soil ploughed did not turn over properly so that the earth was heaped in lumps, and this affected the subsequent harrowing. Chen Chi-pin, the Party branch secretary, and another team member, after studying the situation, found there were three causes: the grass was too long, the roots were too matted, and the soil was too sticky. After setting the ploughs to turn a broader and longer furrow these defects were set right and reclamation work sped ahead.

At first, the girls were given the job of cutting the grass and digging up the tree roots. But they were not satisfied with this work. They elected Pang Shu-ying to learn to handle the plough. Pang devoted herself whole-heartedly to her new job, and learned to handle and repair the plough from one of the Huachuan boys whom she would go to whenever any question

came up. So when she actually started to plough, she kept more or less in line. Once when she was ploughing, the share caught in a tree root so suddenly that the plough jumped to one side with a great jerk. Struck by the handles, Pang was thrown to the ground quite a distance away and got covered with mud. After that, whenever she was ploughing, she gripped the handles of the plough at arm's length. Thus she could not be knocked down by the handles no matter what tree roots the plough caught in. "Experience gained from a somersault," she told others.

Two months ago, the place was a dry, yellowish sea of grass. But now, after all the sweat shed by the young people, black waves have begun to ripple over eighty hectares.

HOW THEY MATURED

Pang Shu-ying was the most active of the girls; she always started ahead of the others on every job to which they were assigned. If they were told to cut grass, she would be sharpening her scythe before the others had put down their rice bowls, and would already be cutting while the others were still on their way to the field. "Being one of the initiators of the team," she thought to herself, "I must take the lead on every important assignment."

It was not until Chen Chi-pin, the Party branch secretary, had talked with her that she began to realize that unless the rest were drawn in, there could be no collective effort. She began to see to it that, in what-

ever job they were assigned, everybody kept up with her. She also helped five girls to learn to plough.

When Kao Chung-teh, a youngster of eighteen, joined in digging up tree roots, the ground was waterlogged and the air thick with mosquitoes. But he was resolute and ready to face any hardships. Then one day he remembered his "sweetheart," a very pretty young girl who had been his playmate when a child. They had entered school together and both had enrolled for secondary school in the summer of 1955. Before the school term began, however, the Peking youth had sponsored the volunteer land reclamation team. When Kao Chung-teh heard of this, he thought, "My parents are Communists, and I am a Youth Leaguer. When the motherland beckons, I must take the lead." He put down his name without consulting anybody. He managed to have a quick meeting with his girl friend before setting out. "Will she still love me if she sees me working with a pick like this, covered with mud and mosquito bites?" he thought to himself. "And even if she does feel the same as in the past, will she be willing to leave Peking, and come to live here four thousand *li* away in a straw hut?" He became very worried and was no longer as active as before.

Noticing his mood, the group leader of the Youth League had a heart-to-heart talk with him. His mates also gave him advice, and the Party branch secretary talked to him. In the end he realized that, as a Youth Leaguer, he ought not to let his love for a girl prevent him from working well. After he stopped worrying, he worked even better than before.

Not long after, he received a letter from his girl friend, saying that she loved him all the more since he had joined the land reclamation team.

Although it has only around sixty members, this land reclamation team of young people is blazing a trail in opening up the fertile virgin soil of the country, in the wake of which more bountiful farms will appear.

November 1955

FRIENDSHIP FARM

Tang Ju-yen

Our train pulled into Fulitun Station in Chihsien County, Heilungkiang Province, at six o'clock in the morning. Six months ago this was still the provisional headquarters for the planning of the Friendship State Farm, but as soon as the 98 tractors, 100 combine-harvesters and a large amount of other modern farm equipment, all gifts from the Soviet Union, had been brought here and detailed production plans had been completed by the organizers of the farm assisted by Soviet specialists, most of the workers moved over to the farm itself and its main office shifted from Fulitun to Hsinglungchen.

Fulitun Station, however, is still busy with farm affairs. A convoy of new trucks, also gifts from the Soviet Union, was loading up with all kinds of goods and materials needed by the farm both for agricultural work and capital construction.

Over this busy scene the rising sun heralded a bright day. A flock of wild geese flew in wedge formation across a cloudless sky. Smaller birds of the steppes kept up an incessant chatter and singing as I left Fulitun in a motor cycle side-car.

Building and construction was going on all along the stretch of 28 miles from Fulitun to Hsinglung-

chen. These were no longer the old steppes I had seen last spring. There was constant movement on the highway. We overtook one group of trucks after another—some carrying timber, others oil. A thousand horse-drawn carts, which the peasants are using to help the building of the farm, formed a seemingly endless, slowly moving line carrying gravel and stone to the building sites. We also passed carts piled with wash basins, leather shoes, tins of biscuits, sweets and other goods for the Chihsien County department store. The road is clearly too narrow for the traffic it now carries and the provincial authorities have a surveying team charting a new road. Their red and white flags fluttered all along the way.

RICH STEPPES

The land of Friendship Farm is shaped like a horseshoe with its open ends facing the town of Kiamusze. There are a number of old villages inside the horseshoe, but east of the farm there is a great expanse of unpopulated wasteland, much of it untrodden by man. The farm itself is divided into five branch farms each worked by two or three production teams, 13 in all, each with seven or eight tractors.

The farm has about 80,000 acres of land and it would take four or five days to get around it on foot.

Normally the whole of this wild area is covered in spring time with grasses breast high. In winter they wither and are covered with a blanket of snow. The next spring, nourished by the melting snow and heavy rains, they flourish again while the last year's

crop turns to mould. This process, repeated year after year, has left a rich top soil on the steppes, full of organic matter and very fertile.

Directly beneath this top soil the whole area is covered with from three to close on seven feet of granular black earth, very loose in structure and needing no special irrigation.

One old farmer living near Friendship Farm told me that during the past forty-odd years he has cultivated the same piece of land there and never put fertilizer on it. But he is still reaping top-notch crops.

All the way from Kiamusze to the bank of the Ussuri, the land is equally fertile, and about a hundred farms the size of the Friendship State Farm can be set up there.

VIRGIN SOIL TO GRANARY

The history of the state farm began in October last year when the Soviet Union sent China a gift of machinery and equipment sufficient to establish a large-scale grain farm. They also sent a group of specialists to help organize it.

The very next month a survey group of Chinese agricultural workers accompanied by Soviet specialists arrived in the bleak steppes. In the next three months, working under the roughest pioneering conditions and often in temperatures of 20 or 30 degrees below zero, they completed the work of surveying for the new farm.

I visited the group myself at this stage. I found them plodding in snow knee-deep. The piercing wind

made our eyes water; the tears froze on our eyelashes. One could hardly hold the pencil in one's numbed fingers, but shine or storm, they carried on. Finally the plans for Friendship Farm were made and charted. It was truly a product of Sino-Soviet friendship and joint effort. While this work was going forward, the Soviet experts took the opportunity of personally training a number of young Chinese workers in their methods.

Thus it was that a new era of scientific agricultural land utilization was ushered in in China.

In April this year our drivers took the Soviet gift tractors to the newly reclaimed fields for the first spring sowing of wheat.

In May, a plan of turning up virgin soil on a large scale was carried out.

In less than two months, in May and June, 56,700 acres of land were ploughed up. This was 7,170 acres more than the original target set for the year. By next year the whole of this area will be under wheat, barley, oats, soya-beans, maize, *kaoliang* (sorghum) and sunflowers, or turned into fine pastures.

At the end of July the farm began to harvest its first rich harvest—5,000 acres of wheat. Combine-harvesters moved like ships through an ocean of waving grain. Soviet specialists paid frequent visits to the fields to check the work of the combines. At night the dry ground was flood-lit. It is equipped with modern electrical gear given us by the Soviet Union. Lorries automatically unload grain, conveyors are electrically-operated. So are the winnowing machines, grain sorters, dryers and seed selectors

which can sort out seven or eight different grades of seed grain.

I met people from Peking, Nanking, Shenyang and other parts of the country who had come to work on the farm. They included professors and students from agricultural schools, agronomists and tractor drivers, all fired with enthusiasm for their job and looking forward to the day when the whole vast farm is brought under cultivation and everything working at full blast.

The plans for the future inspire everyone. These envisage not only the planting of grain crops and fodder, but of vegetables, orchards and forests. They are also planning to raise cattle, horses, pigs, chickens and ducks. The farm will raise grain as its main product, but it will also go in for livestock.

By this autumn the buildings for the livestock were nearing completion. The farm was looking forward to receiving the first batches of animals which are to come from various parts of China and from the Soviet Union. According to the 1955 plan the farm will raise 50 milch cows, 50 calves, 150 beef cattle, 150 horses, 200 pigs and 2,000 chickens. Next year 3,000 pigs and a still larger number of cattle, horses, chickens and ducks will be raised.

The farm management is also planning to go in for breeding pedigree cattle, horses and pigs. This will help nearby agricultural producers' co-operatives improve their stock.

These livestock plans call for large amounts of fodder. The farm will therefore rotate crops, setting aside part of its land each year for pasturage and

fodder crops as well as sugar-beet. It will also graze its herds on nearby steppeland pastures. In the future its milkmaids will use electrical milking machines and the farm will supply neighbouring cities with thousands of gallons of milk and hundreds of tons of fresh meat.

A FARM CITY

The scale of capital construction on Friendship State Farm is already impressive.

There are small hills of piled-up stone and timber, dumps of sand, lime and cement. Brick kilns are working to capacity.

Capital construction on the farm started in June. The work of opening up new land had been completed ahead of schedule and the workers, buoyed up by this success, went at the job of building with tremendous enthusiasm.

The complete plan of the farm buildings provides for a floor space of 1,076,400 sq. ft. The buildings to be erected include repair and assembly shops, a power station, a grain processing plant, store-houses for seeds and farm tools, offices, living quarters, a nursery, a school, a club, shops, a hospital, and stables and other buildings for the livestock. More than half of these buildings will be ready this year.

I remember how one day last March, when it was still snowing, I accompanied seven of the early pioneers of the farm who were going to set up some cabins in an outlying area where the steppes had not yet been reclaimed. We brought with us grain, fro-

zen roebuck and some cooking utensils. The snow was more than two feet deep. We walked in one another's footsteps. When the site was chosen, we cleared the snow and opened a road to it. The manager of this branch farm-to-be himself went in a tractor with the driver to fetch timber from a forest more than 25 miles away. The tractor made round trips without pause for two days and two nights, while we went ahead with the cabin. At that time we had to bring all our own food in and build our own lodgings. Water was also a problem. There was no well and no stream near by.

Now, wells have been sunk and the workers can take shower baths in specially fitted trailer trucks; the kitchen gardens are yielding plenty of vegetables, so the food has improved. The buildings, now being rapidly completed one after another, fit in with the rustic style of the Chinese country houses. Most of them were finished by September or October. Soon the whole staff of the farm will be housed in modern quarters. The power plant and store-houses have already been built and good roads are being laid from the main farm to the branch farms.

Friendship Farm is becoming a little agricultural town. It has already become a symbol of the new in Chinese agriculture. By demonstrating the incomparable superiority of socialist methods over the old, it is helping to speed up the socialist transformation of our agriculture.

The farm is also a great school. More than thirty Soviet specialists working here will pass on the experience which the U.S.S.R. has gained in the last thirty-odd years in land reclamation and in management of large state grain farms. They will train large numbers of administrators, agricultural technicians, tractor drivers, and operators of various new farm implements.

When I asked one young woman tractor driver what her ambition was, she replied:

"To plough up more virgin soil for the country!"

I've no doubt she voiced the thoughts of all the workers on Friendship Farm. When they have finished their work here, there are new worlds for them to conquer. Their ambition is to pass on what they have learnt here to the farmers in every corner of China to speed up the building of socialism.

This is the spirit too in which the Soviet Union has helped us to establish Friendship Farm. I remember one night when the roar of the tractors on a night shift drifted over the steppes. I looked out the window of our trailer. The dazzling lights of head lamps pierced the darkness. Comrade Krutikov, chief adviser on agricultural technique on the farm, was telling us about the enormous task of land reclamation that the Soviet people are engaged on. Then we went on to discuss the present and future of the Friendship Farm and the relations between the Chinese and Soviet peoples.

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